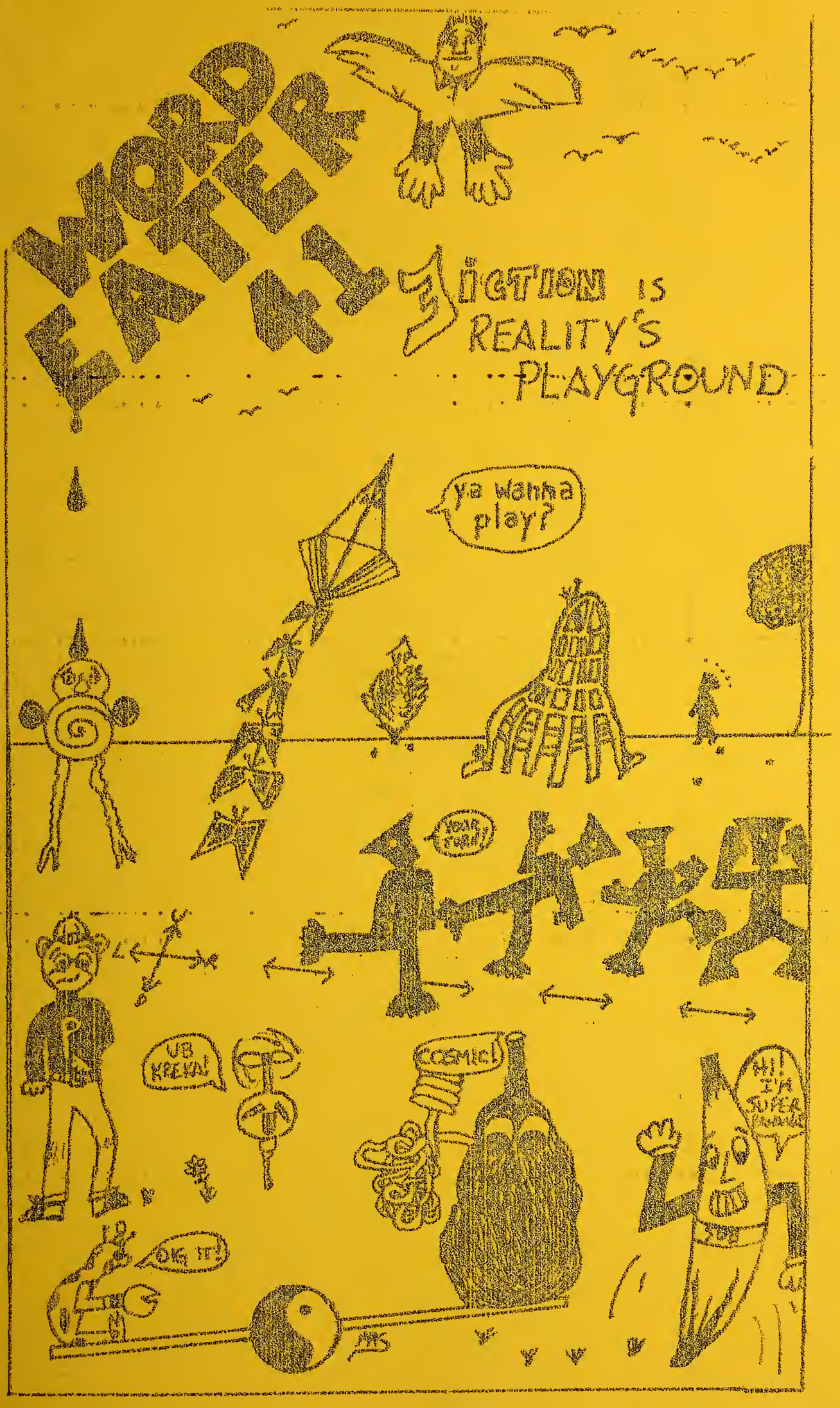

WORD EATER 41
FICTION IS REALITY'S PLAYGROUND
ya wanna play?
UB KREKA!
COSMIC!
HI! I'M SUPER
OIG IT!

TABLE OF CONTENTS, continued

Brothers of the Sea	Mountains Veiled In Mist	36
Dan Zahorcik	Dreamer	36
Jayne Woodcock	The One That Got Away	36
Teri Moore	Truth	38
Judy Belfield	Thus Far And No Further	38
Chris Moore	Robbery	38
Judy Belfield	Sunday Afternoons	38
Kathy Siedler	Cataclysm	38
Nancy Lockhart	The Prize-Winning Photograph of a War Correspondent	39
Judy Belfield	St. Martin And The Beggar	39
Teri Moore	Observation	39
Teri Moore	Is It Too Late For Dreams?	39
Nancy Lockhart	Grace Before Meals	39

****

WORDEATER XLI STAFF

Judy Belfield — Maureen Mueller
Steve Faron — Michael A. Stillman
David Moore — Randy Varju
John Stobart

To get a submission printed in this issue, four of the above had to vote for acceptance. For the award winners, only John Stobart is responsible.

Manuscripts or cover designs for WORDEATER number 42 must be submitted to John Stobart in room C-1069 by December 3. Manuscripts will not be returned. They may be anonymous and SHOULD BE TYPED.

Winners for this issue:

POETRY -- TERI MOORE -- $25 PROSE -- JAYNE WOODCOCK -- $25

(Past prize winners are only considered when no new contributors seem worthy.)

COVERS: MICHAEL A. STILLMAN -- $20

Future Deadlines:

February 15, 1982 and April 15, 1982

All copyrights are retained by the authors, and material may not be printed without their permission.

****

TABLE OF CONTENTS

R. Walser Yale	Another Party	1
Teri Moore	Smile	1
Brothers of the Sea	What Is Ours Is Ours	1
Bev Garcia	A Limerick	1
Nancy Lockhart	Wine Knot	1
Michael A. Stillman	Prelude To The Evening Of A Young Dawn	1
Randy Varju	I Love	1
Len Overcash	Strength	2
Teri Moore	Nonsense	2
Michael A. Stillman	Within	2
Teri Moore	Shades Of	2
Michael A. Stillman	Sonata Of The Ravine	3
Judy Belfield	Artist's Block	3
Bev Garcia	Downs And Ups	4
R. Walser Yale	Changing Voice	4
Judy Belfield	Oh, To Be In Nebula In Springtime	4
Kathy Siedler	Forewarning	4
Chris Moore	Chances I, II	4
Charlotte Basinski	Problematic	5
Adriane Saylor	An Answer	5
Kathy Siedler	Legacy	5
Frank Rouch	Terror	5
Chris Moore	Faces	5
Auberon Thomas	Rime Of The Night	6
Sharon Fink	Understanding	6
Chris Moore	Just Me	6
Teri Moore	Resistance	6
Chris Moore	Frustration	7
Kathy Siedler	The Coffee Shop	7
Judy Belfield	Out To The Greengarden Gate	7
Michael A. Stillman	Outsider	7
Brothers of the Sea	Expanding Feelings	8
Nancy Lockhart	Your Death	8
Judy Belfield	Agony In Eden	8
Nancy Lockhart	A Death In Ancient Greece (Or In Bayonne, Jersey)	9
Geri Harder	On Days Like This	9
Brothers of the Sea	Don't Fight The Feeling	9
Kathy Siedler	Ordeal	9
Nancy Lockhart	For Kathy And Betsy And Me	9
Kathy Siedler	Aftermath	9
Judy Belfield	Daisies And Diamonds	10
Dog Chow Dog	Nirvana (Searching For You)	10
Underground Poetry League, Ltd.	Popcorn And Concrete	10
Chris Moore	Past Love Present	10
R. Walser Yale	Something Is Failing	10
Judy Belfield	Epiphany	10

(continued)

TABLE OF CONTENTS, continued

Teri Moore	To A Woman In Love	11
S. D. Butler	You (Reflections On Beauty)	11
Geri Harder	(Was It?)	11
Teri Moore	Square One	11
Bev Garcia	A Flower In My Hair	11
Michael A. Stillman	It Might Have Been Saturday Afternoon	12
Teri Moore	Anniversary	12
Val Breuch	Time For Him To Leave	12
Chris Moore	Warriors	12
Bev Garcia	A Friend Lost	12
Michael A. Stillman	The Words Between	13
Tom Schmitz	Walking	13
Teri Moore	Late At Night	13
Brothers of the Sea	Elephant Heart Beats	13
Brothers of the Sea	Living Poetry	13
Maureen Mueller	I'll Quit Tomorrow	13
Judy Belfield	Two Glasses Of Wine	13
Nancy Lockhart	Always A Cup Between Us	13
Teri Moore	Dear Low Joe, From Marianne	14
Judy Belfield	I Am The Shiver Of Your Skin	14
Geri Harder	Not Buying	14
Julie Wroble	I Deal With You Just Fine	14
Bev Garcia	Bedroom Seasons	14
Nancy Lockhart	This Heart	15
Judy Belfield	Sunday With Similes	15
Bev Garcia	The Other Woman	15
Jayne Woodcock	The Flick Of A Pale Blue Eye	16
Adriane Saylor	I Sing Me	16
Maureen Mueller	The Romantic Pen	16
Judy Belfield	This Madness, Transcendence	17
Maureen Mueller	He Left Me	17
Bev Garcia	Going Home	17
Chris Moore	Gathering	18
Brothers of the Sea	Golden Shafts Of Light -- and -- River Of Rhythm	18
Teri Moore	Street Sounds -- and -- He Didn't Really Look Hurt	19
Randy Varju	Give Me A Clone	19
Chris Moore	He Approached Slowly	19
Teri Moore	No Shades -- and -- Portrait	19
Judy Belfield	Sitting In The Marble-Walled Church	20
Kathy Siedler	Gothic Honey	20
Chris Moore	Drifter	21
R. Walser Yale	Today Traction Died	21
Teri Moore	Word Leas	22
Nancy Lockhart	Bitch Of A Sun	22
Geri Harder	Out To Lunch	22
Nancy Lockhart	It's Yellow Time	22
Kathy Siedler	Illumination	22
Teri Moore	The Sun Dips Slowly	23
Brothers of the Sea	Moonlight Painted Cloud	23
R. Walser Yale	Up From Coffeen	23
Julie Wroble	Alcohol And I Don't Mix	25
Randy Varju	Bread And Butterflies	25
Sharon Fink	Time To Love	25
Teri Moore	Tu-Roses, Cheap	27
Randy Varju	Climbing Stares	27
Teri Moore	Suburbia	28
Tom Boucher	Later	28
Randy Varju	Three Months Before Christmas	30
Sherry Meyers	Playthings	30
Mary Rose Stonehouse	Control	32
Tom Schmitz	Not Again	32
Michael A. Stillman	And After That She Needed To Rest	32
Mary Rose Stonehouse	The Korean Pajamas	33
Teri Moore	Purple Rhododendron	33
Cynthia Jane Craig	Picture Perfect	33
Maureen Mueller	Vacuuming -- and -- Stand Back	35
Randy Varju	Twinkie, Twinkie	35
Bev Garcia	Anti-Domestic -- and -- A Dieter's Lament	35
Chris Moore	All You Can Eat	35

(Continued on inside Back Cover)

R. Walker Hale

ANOTHER PARTY

Ah, another party --
the exaggerated
Good time,
The indigested night.

A room full
of crowded,
Smoky women,
Fools and strange
Friends --
And one wiry,
Spooky, drunken
Ola man
Whirling in a wild
Dance

Who stops
Long enough
To tell you
How many people
He's killed.

****

Bev Garcia

A LIMERICK

An old woman, just with her toes,
pulled all the hair from her nose.
She rose with a start,
and said from her heart,
"It only hurts when it blows!"

****

Michael A. Stillman

PRELUDE TO THE EVENING OF A YOUNG DAWN

EARWAX
EARWAX
EARWAX
EARWACKS
HEREWAX
EARWAX
EUPHONIUM
EARWAX
EARWAX
EARWAX
HUBRIS
EARWAX
CICADAS
EARWAX
ENTROPY
EARWAX
EARWAX
EYEWAX
EARWAX
EARWAX
CHASM
EARWAX
ENDWAS

****

Teri Moore

SMILE

Smile . . .sometime
If for no purpose
Other than
To give your teeth
Some breathing space.

****

Brothers of the Sea

WHAT IS OURS IS OURS

What is ours is ours,
What is theirs is also ours,
Honor among thieves.

****

Nancy Lockhart

WINE KNOT

Put me under, Dr. Beaujolais.
Kiss me till I'm purple.
Tickle me and pickle me,
Twirl me in a circle.
Take me, Dr. Beaujolais,
To surgery with gloves.
Feel for me, sweet bubbly,
Give me all your love.

****

Randy Varju

I LOVE

I love eating baby ducks
Vandalizing trucks
Kissing moving trains
and brains.

I love winos when they're tight
Hookers when they're white
pepper in my tea
and V. D.

I love green mold on my bread
standing on my head
dirty picture shows
and picking my nose.

I love little bloody pups
dirty bathroom cups
breakfast from McDonald's
and presidents named Ronald.

And I love you too!

****

Len Overcash

STRENGTH

Doctor Johnson came into the Surgical Intensive waiting room and saw a squat, balding man sitting on the front edge of the couch frowning at the TV. The ashtray beside his elbow was overflowing.

"Mr. Thornley?" Dr. Johnson asked.

Norman Thornley slowly looked toward him through eyes watery and inflamed and nodded.

Several long strides brought Dr. Johnson closer, looking down on Thornley who did not stand or offer his hand to shake.

Tall and aloof, Dr. Johnson detached himself from all emotion.

"I'll be blunt," he said, though he was always blunt, whether or not he warned people about it.

"Your wife is in very grave condition. She has been beaten with a blunt instrument. Probably a piece of pipe or a hammer. And she has several stab wounds about which I'm puzzled. None of these are very deep. Almost as though the perpetrator wasn't trying to kill her that way. Very strange. Finally, she has a gunshot wound in the abdomen, small caliber, luckily."

Thornley struggled slowly to his feet.

"Will she . . . will she live?" he asked in a harsh whisper, biting his lower lip.

"We'll know more in the next forty-eight hours. But yes, I think she'll make it. Recovery will take a long, long time, but she seems to be a very strong woman to survive all this, Mr. Thornley. And that's what you'll need -- patience and strength."

Norman Thornley turned away to look out the large window at the midnight sky.

"She's going to live," he muttered.

"Be strong," Dr. Johnson repeated in his best professional tone.

Be strong, Thornley wondered. Where at my age will I get enough strength to do it all again?

****

Teri Moore

SHADES OF . . .

I feel like a weed today,
Tall spindly and prickly.
Shooting out my arms
To protect my turf.
Implanting myself firmly,
Pushing my heels down
Into moist soil and
Feeling fat worms
Slip over my roots.
Blowing raspberries to the radishes,
Curling around the carrots,
Nudging Idaho's toes
And I don't want to hear any corn.
I dare anyone to pluck me up.
I'm green today and this is my garden.

****

Teri Moore

NONSENSE

Select a full-bodied word;
Rumplestiltskin, for example,
A word that can't rest quietly,
A word that has to be shouted out:
RUMPLESTILTSKIN!
Savor the word,
Suck in your cheeks,
Blow 'em out,
And roll those consonants
Over your tongue:
RRRRUMPPPPLESTILLLTSKIIIIN.
Make up your own little song,
Walk the streets and hum it loudly and cheerily:
RUM PLE STILT SKIN, DA DA DA DA!
MMM MMM MMMM MMM, BA DA BA DA!
Finally, seize every opportunity
To use your private find
In conversations with the unsuspecting.
"My, my it's really a Rumplestiltskin of a day, isn't it?"
You'll really get a Rumplestiltskin out of it.

****

Michael A. Stillman

WITHIN

The wind ripples the lake.
The unseen makes itself known
To the eye.
Trying to maintain the clarity of vision,
It fades into the soft edge of evening.
I listen to the silence and realize --
Capable of thunder,
I am content with peace of mind.

****

Michael A. Stillman

SONATA OF THE RAVINE

I. Allegro

Pressure building in the inner ear
Confrontation spawning fear
Hemorrhage
Inside

Images moving inside the brain
Repression's workload back again
Doorslam
Knifetwist
Flowers wilt in freezing rain

Vincent died on the cross for someone's sins
But not his own
Civic pride is conformity's den
And he's stoned

I knew a poet once
She was overcome by Plathetic moods;
Her muse was the scuro
in her chiascuro,
And the dep
in her manic-depressive wardrobe.

II. Andante

Always tired, but never sleepy:
The Insomniac's curse.
Maybe if I could just close my eyes . . .
No!
There's too much to see
with my eyes closed.

Did I just hear a cry for help?
Like Van Gogh, I'll lend an ear.
They tell me that the world is spinning;
I feel so much, but never that.

The dying light of a quarter moon
Makes the rainbow fade
To all of the colors of gray,
And my nerve endings scream
Like nails on slate.

Can you hear it?

Blades of memory penetrate
When night lies deep
Scraping bone and goring flesh,
They withdraw satisfied.

Welcome to my reality
Shaped by heredity and environment
And poisoned by experience.

III. Adagio

We were playing roulette out on the desert,
My friend Tammy and I.
I thought I heard someone crying across
the plain,
But she said it was just two bobcats,
making love.

The desert stars were sharp as pins
As they sizzled through our retinas.
Our optic nerves were burning
As we felt the chamber spin;
Another mood dressed in gun-metal black,
And the trigger clicked again.

IV. Coda

An artist grew a painting once,
Called "Ravine in the Peyroulets";
It is a tortured canvas of half-brushstrokes
that is still living.
It features a mountainside audibly burning,
preventing passage,
And a Stygian stream
flowing in ice over sharp rocks,
Carrying the viewer to
His own personal hell.
This artist sold only two paintings
In his mercifully short life,
and "Ravine" was not one of them.

Somewhere tonight
An artist is feeling without a net
into the void
The deep black void.

Can you hear it now?

****

Judy Belfield

ARTIST'S BLOCK

I could twist you
into a pop-art, soup-can, cartoon collage,
or a classic statue of Bacchus,
grape leaves falling on your forehead.
I might pound you as flat
as Grandma Moses's grass,
or a Lichtenstein cow
grazing in a field of yellow lemons.
You could sit in a diner
at three in the morning
on a soft plastic toilet seat,
contemplating the bust of Homer,
Rembrandt browns in the background,
and Titian angels at your feet.
You could be a clock
squeezed like a tear
out of a Joan Miro eye,
or coiled like a spiral jetty
in the center of a Roman arch.
You could be any of these things --
I sit here considering the possibilities --
but instead,
you sleep in that lump of clay,
and don't even dream.

****

Bev Garcia

DOWNS AND UPS

Loneliness isn't just being left by myself.
It's being with someone I know doesn't care.
It's being used, then set carelessly back on a shelf,
and being only one, where there should be a pair.

Sadness isn't just losing when I should have won.
It's the pain in my stomach that won't go away.
It's the tears in my eyes that blot out the sun,
and make me wish for no more new days.

Hope isn't just a glimmer in the back of my mind.
It's something that gets me through a difficult bout.
It's knowing to keep looking and someday I'll find
that peace at the end of my long, uphill route.

Contentment is more than just not being driven.
It's smiling on the inside, as well as the out.
It's knowing I've received as much as I've given,
and living each day, once more, free of doubt.

****

Judy Belfield

OH, TO BE IN NEBULA IN SPRINGTIME

Oh, to be in Nebula in springtime,
far away from the trill of songbirds,
the bittersweet fragrance of clover,
and the hints of honeysuckle in the air.
My arms feel so bare
as I try to hide
in the corners of my winter self,
peeking out from time to time,
only to spot one more flowerbud,
and know it is too exquisitely real.
I dread the caress of April,
for it means to drown me,
while saffron-faced Phoebus looks softly through clouds.
Oh, to be in Nebula,
where the seasons are so much the same
they aren't given names.
I want to sit there
among the clustered stars,
keeping watch on the darkness,
and come home on the first snowflake of December.

****

Kathy Siedler

FOREWARNING

Beware you tyrant lover
Cast no shadows on my dreams,
Prepare yourself to battle
You'll not use your caustic schemes.
I'll survive your onslaught
Though you've staged a vicious war,
I'll stand, my head above the clouds
A scepter in your storm.
I'll face the icy winds
Lashing violently at me,
I'll withstand the devastation
I'll preserve my dreams.
There'll be no annihilation
No forsaken dreams to grieve,
You'll not tempt me to abandon
For I still believe.

****

R. Walser Yale

CHANGING VOICE

How to escape
Consistent voice
Drugged
Unsure
Seek
Rejoice
The choices
To make
Invariably
Your own --

Reading to mirrors
Grimace
Stoned.
How to escape
Voice --
Self
Contradiction
Parallel.

How to escape
A boundless
Cell --
No boundaries
To tunnel under,
Climb over --
No secret door,

But one
Truly drastic
Drug
Which I am
Not yet ready
To take.

****

Chris Moore

CHANCES I, II

Unlock my chains
I want to be held
One second longer
Strength, break these bonds.

Release my mind
I've learning to do
My brain will
Take on any test.

Heart and lungs
Fortify my muscles
With a hungering power
To tear down resistance.

My day has arrived
I have prepared
Now I will act.
Take MY CHANCES.

Give me some room
I want to stretch out
Develop all my talents.
Mistakes don't worry me
They're part of growing.
Besides they are mine
I can use them later.

****

Charlotte Basinski

PROBLEMATIC

"keep your sense of humor"
Have heard this cliche
It's really hard though,
when at night I lay.
"Smile through your tears
Let come what may."
How can I when
there is no pay?
No food for the kids
from day to day.
Tomorrow will be better
I pray that it may
Somewhere -- somehow
I'll find the way.

****

Adriane Saylor

AN ANSWER

What do you say
when you see a woman
with the sky in her hands
holding up the moon
this lady tells you
tomorrow is now
asks you to hold on tight
she's gonna take you for a
moonride over Cowtown

You look at her
with one eye on the way
she's got you fixed
in her lust/best stare
and you say yes
and forget that any moment
up till then
existed for either one of you.

Frank Rouch

TERROR

Terror lies
In butterflies
And things that should bring joy
Little boy cries
And then he sighs
A brand new broken toy

****

Kathy Siedler

LEGACY

Sometimes we are as children needing to be led, yet not always following in stride. Children of the world, while you are yet naive, I ask that you hear my words. Perhaps then you may find your true selves and fear not the inevitable, for you will appreciate the transcience of life and breathe each breath with a revived gratitude.
Your adversary shall be persistent, even now he creeps up -- silently devastating. Yet worry not about things you may only delay and never truly prevent. Accept the interlude in peaceful slumber. Celebrate life each day, for in sorrow there is only regret.
Once you have found the gateway to your inner selves and touched your very soul, you shall see that no reward lies in fearing a termination which comes of every living being. It will then appear to you a natural course; one that may only be accepted, for in time your rebellion against it would become a fruitless journey.
Life conceals so much sadness in the shadows of laughter . . . make peace among yourselves, yet especially with yourself. Attempt not to conquer the evil in others, but that of yourself.
For every dream I gave away or left in an embryonic stage; for every dawn I neglected to observe and every passion I let lay unkindled in slumber -- I leave these to you, for in knowing you, I came to know myself. In all people I have seen a portion of myself. Thus, I leave behind hope that you will also find such splendor in awakening and serenity in departure.

****

Chris Moore

FACES

Faces have told me stories.
In them the world has been revealed to me.
I have seen faces of hate, grotesque and withdrawn.
Faces of love were beautiful,
Glowing in the full radiance of the sun.
Hunger can also be seen on faces --
Black faces, brown faces, yellow faces,
Red faces and white faces.
They are hollow. They plead.
Faces of peace are relaxed, joyful and full of life.
I have also seen the faces of war, distorted,
Broken by despair with no hope in sight.
The faces of the future are bright and hopeful.
The faces of the past are empty, revealing nothing
Of the life they live.
Some faces are alluring. These belong to the lively people.
The contorted faces belong to haters
Those who make war and cause hunger.
Faces do reveal the world.

****

Auberon Thomas

RIME OF THE NIGHT

If we can feel the heat
Rising in between
Then it must be real

If we can pierce the sky
Come out the other side
Then it must be true

If we can dream a life
With the ceilings high
Then it must be ours

If we can carve a heart
Out of moons and sighs
Then it must be love

Sometimes I can see tomorrow
And we're smiling there
But sometimes the wheel keeps turning
And we just don't care
Sometimes the hope is shining
And it burns right through
Sometimes the moon is breathing
And you're feeling blue

And sometimes I wish we were sane . . .

****

Chris Moore

JUST ME

You are STARING
at ME.
I'm not an exhibit.
Do you think I'm an object
To be leered at?
I'm a person
Not an alien being.

Why do you GAWK?
My existence is real
Not animated,
No special effects,
I don't hiss or growl.

Nothing about me justifies your INTENSE SCRUTINY.
I have a soul;
You are similarly endowed, I gather,
But you find it necessary
To glare
At ME!

****

Teri Moore

RESISTANCE

Why do you tap on my window so?
I won't let you in.
Your sly, wrinkled grin
Doesn't fool me.
I will not be overcome
By your sneaky silence.
I know you're still there
Waiting,
Hoping to creep stealthily
Into my house,
With gnarled, trembling fingers,
And leave
Unwanted signs of age on my body.

Sharon Fink

UNDERSTANDING

There are those who are sighted,
but cannot see,
How very sad those people
must be.
Their eyes can focus and
tear and wink
But they miss the point with
only a blink.
They may look and watch
and study and hear,
But refuse to consider or
think -- out of fear.
They cannot accept and
can't understand,
They're helpless as aliens
in an alien land.
There are those without vision,
who inform and tell,
And understand what they
"see" so well.
They listen and feel for
vibrations deep,
They're faithful to the vigil
that they keep.
They strain to know and
care and feel,
Their senses lead them to
what is real.
They reason out all that they
possibly can,
And present their answer
to the sighted man.

****

Chris Moore

FRUSTRATION

Somehow the unfairness
stands out.
Even if only to me,
Which makes sense.

As a victim
Understanding is my forte,
A constant,
always following.
Wrongs, no matter how trivial
Are hoisted upon me.
Rights unforgotten.

****

Kathy Siedler

THE COFFEE SHOP

Ravenous eyes seek consolation in a familiar face; perhaps a smile would suffice, even if only temporarily.
Caffein and nicotine enthusiasts congregate to indulge their daily requirements. Bleary-eyed, shadowy-featured figures make their way through the morning -- so their mundane routine commences.
I have never tasted the blandness of hollow routine, somehow spared the abominations of a stagnant life and devoid of the repressed dreams that dwell within merely empty beings.
I have always existed as an unruly limb upon a birch, refusing to conform to the direction of the majority. I proceed in fathoms of controversy.
Some stare blankly as dreams wither and perish. Caffein dawning and barbital gleaming; between the two, an empty sphere.
Sacrificial martyrs. I pity them, although it was their own abstinent palms that set them upon the baser rungs of subsistence. Sometimes the sacrifice is not worthy of its alleged advantage. Some profess to be resilient; always bending, never breaking. Bowing obediently to the winds, so taut forms will not snap under its pressure. Pragmatic lives; no frivolity; no caprice. Immobile in their own refuse, blaming the very environment in which they chose to dwell for the adversity bestowed upon them. Some so easily mastered, they were destined to be servants.
Midmorning rain batters the window of the coffee shop, but I do not succumb as do these haggard realists. I decide, after observing the products of meaningless existence to nourish my dreams to full bloom -- reality.

****

Judy Belfield

OUT TO THE GREENGARDEN GATE

Out to the Greengarden gate
to wait for the jingle of keys,
Please,
take that foot off my face --
I'm a lasting disgrace
to my mother.
Out to the bluelilac lake,
and taking my tinsel along.
I may be wrong
about all the right things,
but honey still stings --
and there's mother,
pulling a shawl
over all of her all,
and trying to hide from the shame.
I conquered, but saw I was lame,
just the same --
there never was laurel in clover.
The day had to end
on one side or the other,
and when it was over --
there was mother,
kissing a vagrant in velveteen jeans
and ripping my seams out from under.
But was it over?
Out to the fir-bearing forest
to pick up the crackling cones.
Like the mess in my bedroom on Monday,
they litter the landscape til Sunday,
emitting a chorus of groans and moans --
and mother sits next to the door,
welding my underwear right to the floor.
Can't bother with father;
he'd rather just lather
and shave,
no matter the patter,
the rant or the rave.
There still aint another

****

Michael A. Stillman

OUTSIDER

you and I we
hide a face the
flat pavane we
feel a mind but
inside

you and I we
talk a friend the
time alone we
share a pain cut
inside

you and I we
spark a blood the
killing sun we
live a life shut
inside

****

Brothers of the Sea

EXPANDING FEELINGS

Expanding feelings,
An emotional snowball,
Ever growing love.

****

like toothless old mother,
biting my bones like an acid refrain:

"What have I to gain,
what have I to lose,
what have I to take to the tomb?
There isn't a mile, but an inch,
so they say,
from maturity back to the womb."

****

Nancy Lockhart

YOUR DEATH

Your death has crawled
Into me like a snake
That masquerades as vein --
If only I could bleed it away.
But, instead, it slides and hides and laughs
Its echoes of madness,
Sucking at my raw brains,
Drawing away the dregs of my strength.
Your death is a worm
Which lays her eggs
On my heart.

****

Julie Wrobel

I CAN SEE IT SO CLEAR

I can see it so clear --
   but I'm too weak to fight,
         too tired to run,
         too scared to cry.
   Don't look at me,
   I can see tears rolling
                down your cheek.
   Tears are no solution.
      They don't heal.

I'm leaving soon
            and I'm sorry.
   I didn't choose this.
   Nobody asked for my opinion.
You know I don't want to go --
   and it gnaws my insides so painfully.
It hurts, but I have a destiny.

Save your stupid pity.
   It only makes me realize my alternatives.
            Nothing.
   Stop crying I say!
   Grow up for once
            and leave me now.
My god, everyone has to die
                someday.

****

Geri Harder

ON DAYS LIKE THIS

On days like this
Nothing hurts.
When all the guys
In flannel shirts
And baseball hats
Remind me of you.
When the gray sky
Is just a shade of blue.
When the wind in my hair
Feels like your hand
As if somewhere,
You're remembering too.
On days like this
That's enough;
Though I know it's just
Imaginary stuff
That makes me smile.
As touchable
And lasting
As the passing
Wind.

****

Judy Belfield

AGONY IN EDEN

There is an agony in Eden
   which cannot speak itself,
   and so it writhes
   in the lush and lonely moonlight,
   trembling,
   as its slow heartbeat
      throbs against the damp earth,
   quivering,
   as it searches the stars for a voice
      which will wail through eternity,
      and echo back
      seven times seven.
Death stalks Eden in the night,
   lightly fingering a cage of ribs,
   which flutters delicately like a harp --
      a sudden gasp sucks in
      a final breath,
      and the cold shadow
      moves silently on.
Where are the words of anguish,
   and how am I to say them
   with rocks on my throat
   and God's leaden foot
   on my soul?

****

Nancy Lockhart

A DEATH IN ANCIENT GREECE
(OR IN BAYONNE, NEW JERSEY)

Be quick, sweet hemlock,
Expedient upon the heart.
Let breath fly swift away.
Breath which long has mocked mortality.
Make haste this brave departure,
For Slow convulses to ashen hue, and
Drowns in its own drool,
Offending sensibilities
Of those which loathe to grieve.

The dayflower, the sparrow and I
Together
Taste the wind.

****

Brothers
Of the Sea

DON'T FIGHT THE FEELING

Don't fight the feeling,
Stay with me til morning comes,
Says she who fears not.

****

Kathy Siedler

ORDEAL

Though you are near me,
I walk alone.
Even my shadow dawdles,
detached from all things
good and evil.
Discontented in attachment
yet moreso in this indifference.
Fearing the consequences
of being afraid.

Though your lips graze my cheek
I feel emptiness and sadness;
a loss.
But of what?
Of what is not?
I cannot simulate love.
I walk alone,
whether I am or not.
The ultimate emptiness.

I am not aged
yet feel a drained weariness.
Have my emotions chilled
so I may not love?
I am so distant, so remote,
yet willfully so.
Suffering to keep from suffering,
Feeling nothing so I may not feel pain.
An empty abyss.
God, has it come to this?

****

Nancy Lockhart

FOR KATHY AND BETSY AND ME

Discontent clung to the corners of the room.
Loneliness curtained the windows.
These she cleaned and then
Swept up the anger of her sisters
Into a neat pile, an important accumulation.
She couldn't dispose of the sweepings.
They seemed to her sacred, somehow,
Like the burnt palms of Ash Wednesday
Or the remains of an ancient ancestor.
Something of herself needed to be placed there
Among the gatherings,
To be mingled,
To be made common,
Before the pile could be removed.
Yet she dismissed every idea of adding parts
Or representations of herself
For fear they each contained
The whole of her existence.
There was nothing she could give,
And so the pile remained thus
For days and weeks,
Allowed to disappear of its own volition.
Now the house holds these fragments
Like the womb of
A dead mother
Holds the bones
Of her child . . .
As inconspicuous as
Cobwebs in a cellar.

****

Judy Belfield

DAISIES AND DIAMONDS

May I tell you of dimpled daisies
smiling at the thunder,
curling their velvety petals
over their faces
so the bellowing stormgods
can't see them giggle?
May I tell you of the thousand diamond
eyes
flashing in the grass just as the sun
rises,
and how they glitter and dance
through the short morning hour
before they escape into the air
where they sparkle and stare
and wait for moonlight?
And may I tell you of fitful midnights
without any stars,
but only shadows and delusions
flickering out their illusory lives
into the deathbeds of darkness?
My empty soul is there,
mourning a stillborn dream
which lies silent and crumbling
in the dust.
Oh, yes --
I, too, would rather hear
of daisies and diamonds.

****

Kathy Siedler

AFTERMATH

Beneath the tree that shelters me,
I lie in quiet reverie.
No affection, passion left,
An empty shelf where they were kept.
Fragments of a severed heart
Are windswept, drifting, torn apart.
Shattered dreams in silent grief,
Scattered pieces in the breeze.
Among the ruins the remnants stand,
Like withered cacti in the sand.

****

Dog Chow Dog

NIRVANA (SEARCHING FOR YOU)

A life,
Led in seeking
For you.
Freedom
You possess;
A tethered independence
Of life,
Searching
For an unattainable goal,
With loyalty unflagging
For you.
A book,
Once read,
That now is closed,
Will I find you
Sweet, lovely and
Free,
Nirvana?

****

Chris Moore

PAST LOVE PRESENT

Yesterday,
You loved me.
Our love brightened
The darkest way.

Our hearts rang with joy,
Kisses sparked the heavens.
Love whispers
Thundered across mountains

The sun's heat became a cool breeze
Next to the fire
In our hearts.
We were in love.

Let's love now
Like yesterday.

****

Judy Belfield

EPIPHANY

Stepping lightly on the stair,
   she glanced back but briefly,
   with all the gold of sunshine
      in her hair,
   and on her face,
   the glow of an enchanted smile.
In a moment's blinking
   she was gone --
   an apparition winking in a doorway --
But in that small, unmeasured time,
   before a mind could question,
   another eye had caught the rhyme
   of sunshine, glow and smile.

****

The Underground Poetry League, Ltd.

POPCORN AND CONCRETE

When it hits my senses
   Like a long lost friend
I've got to remember . . .

That familiar scent
   Takes me
To a better time

To a beat-up Pontiac
   And a brown-eyed girl
And popcorn and concrete.

****

R. Walser Yale

SOMETHING IS FAILING

Somewhere
Something is failing.
It's falling and I can't
Put my finger on it
(Not enough fingers)

My room is . . . uh
Symbolic,
I guess.
Clothes and sheets
And books
Endless piles
Of unanswered letters,
Forgotten receipts.

Looks like
Fall's ugly leaves
Blown and scattered
In gutters and corners --
In a piling disarray,
A strange chronological
Order

I lay and listen
To Abbey Road
For the seven-hundred
Fifty-thousand
Two-hundred
Seventy
First time . . .

She couldn't be
All <u>that</u> heavy.

****

Teri Moore

TO A WOMAN IN LOVE

To a woman in love,
Sometimes the vilest man
Evolves into an heroic character.
For a woman,
An emotion of such intensity
Clouds the vision,
Distracts the intellect
Immobilizes the heart.
She worships her superman
Illogically, passionately
And selfishly,
Until her knight
Dissolves inevitably
Into
A
Mere
Man.

****

Geri Harder

(WAS IT?)

Calm.
Competent.
Coolly detached.
(coldly?)

Ran like hell.
A thief in the night.
(boldly?)

Listened.
A soul-mate.
(heard me?)

Love.
Just out of my reach.
(lured me?)

I can't remember
How it really was.

****

Bev Garcia

A FLOWER IN MY HAIR

I saw his soul before all else.
In his eyes was a reflection of myself.
He put a flower in my hair.
I cared.
Our minds, like two lonely hands, intertwined.
A part of me, long dead, laughed again.
He put a kiss upon my heart,
I loved.
The seasons changed too quickly, as sometimes happens.
The flower slowly wilted and died.
The lonely hands released their grip.
I cried.

****

S. D. Butler

YOU (REFLECTIONS ON BEAUTY)

When I look at you many things I see,
Will I ever know you, sweet mystery?
The world has never witnessed such beauty,
So lovely, do I ask too much of thee?

In your eyes I see a sparkling waterfall,
My soul is stirred by its soft gentle call,
A crescent of moon from heaven did fall,
And became the smile that I still recall.

Auburn locks make plain a painted sunset,
A heart of gold on a throne of velvet,
Sweet captivity, I'm caught in your net,
Upon your head a ruby crown I'd set.

But to gaze upon thy countenance fair,
To run my fingers through your precious hair,
For such pleasures any risk I would dare,
My love for you I forever declare.

Whenever you're near I need play no role.
You've reached into my heart and touched my soul,
For so short a season you made me whole,
And thus became my one and only goal.

These simple words that I blend into rhyme,
To express those things that I feel all the time,
The sound of your voice as clear as a chime,
Is loving you too much truly a crime?

8********

Teri Moore

SQUARE ONE

He cheated
She tried
He left
She cried
He returned
She lied --
A new lover
To hide.
He stayed
She departed
Two remain
Broken-hearted
They wind up
Where they started.

****

Michael A. Stillman

IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN SATURDAY AFTERNOON

It might have been Saturday afternoon;
Alone by the brook,
We celebrated the meadow,
Verdant and sparkling,
And smiled at the young clover
Speckled playfully across the green.
I saw a rainbow in the stained-glass sky,
And its colors were mirrored in her eyes.

Then I woke up
And placed my feet firmly on the ground.
I thought myself foolish
For having dreamed that I could become involved again
So soon,
When the wounds in my back had not yet healed.

I went to the window
The street was grey and empty
Must be Sunday again.

****

Val Breuch

TIME FOR HIM TO LEAVE

Time for him to leave.

Reluctantly,
he eases out,
spent.
He departs,
memory of their ecstatic union
spilling over him.

Joyfully,
she rises with
him
captured within . . .
a caterpillar wrapped in its cocoon
he is hers though he is gone.

She wishes he knew
her happiness
with her possession of
his seed

She cannot give her lover too much.

****

Bev Garcia

A FRIEND LOST

Today I made her savagely weep
guilty pellets of driving rain
that penetrated my hardened soul
as pain-games were viciously played.

Thoughtless minds vehemently fired
lightening bolts of angry distrust
and ever-growing anguish was felt
for what was lost in battles waged.

Teri Moore

ANNIVERSARY

Well dear,
Another year
Almost here.
Marital peers
Two careers
Steady gears
Paid arrears
No tears
Few fears
Some leers
Sexy ears
Be here
Next year,
Shall we?

****

Chris Moore

WARRIORS

They stood together
Battle raging,
Unafraid of danger
Hands interlocked.
They were fighters
Against war,
Two amongst billions
Seeking love.
Love conquered them
Even as the war raged on.
They wanted love
For each other,
Their families, neighbors,
Love for the world
So long as the battle raged.
They realized
There is love
Throughout the world
Filled with love and joy,
No hint of fighting.
Their love was
A million yesterdays,
Every tomorrow.
It had to be,
They were all there was,
Only they could
Dream, hope, pray
Wish and love.

****

Our ammunition, like deadly thunder,
echoed throughout smoldering flames,
slowly suffocatdd by unspoken remorse
shared by each, in separate space.

****

Michael A. Stillman

THE WORDS BETWEEN

You
engage
my mind in
polite discourse
verbal clouds masking
true expression we talk
with no hands the lighthouse of
your eyes lip-reading across the
valley of emotion catch the wind
in a net of knotty tongue bondage tied
by staccato chips of thought chunk reverb we
translate the tangled webs of sound dialectic
chervil cut logos brisket (rare) and pelting
celtic skelter from the starry side of
Pluto or a swarm of shadow in
a primal dream with pneumatic
milksuit crescent mooncrashing
on the frustration of
the necessary
ritual of
words between
you and
I

****

Teri Moore

LATE AT NIGHT

Late at night
When the pipes gurgle,
I can't sleep til
I wiggle up next to
Your backside.
If you stir,
Move an inch,
I follow.
In the grey morning hours,
I awake to find you
Hanging
On the edge of the bed.
Me nightbehind.
When you're gone,
The bed is TOO BIG
And I can't sleep
Between cold sheets.

****

Judy Belfield

TWO GLASSES OF WINE

Two glasses of wine
float you out
from the secret places in my mind,
where I keep you stashed away,
pretending you were never real,
float you out
to whisper poetry in my ear,
and I hear,
as though your throat were so near
my lips could touch the words.
Two glasses of wine
are agony.

****

Tom Schmitz

WALKING

Walking
Down
the
street
I
happened
to
notice
her
But she just walked on by
She
had
a
big
nose
anyway

****

Brothers of the Sea

ELEPHANT HEART BEATS

Elephant heart beats,
With the strength of twenty men,
Has he as much love?

****

LIVING POETRY

Living poetry,
Motion defies description,
Femininity.

****

Maureen Mueller

I'LL QUIT TOMORROW

Love's libations
Such sweet sensations
Staggering me with
intoxicating
promises.

Sure . . .
I've ever-imbibed before
But this is a new vintage
So, pop the cork
I'll quit tomorrow.

****

Nancy Lockhart

ALWAYS A CUP BETWEEN US

Always a cup between us --
Tea, coffee, a coke with two straws,
A prophet's blood on tap.
(I become) your fruit jar,
Fermenter of miracles
Where you come to sip
When thirsty or sad.
The chalice of Alice in Wonderland,
Overflowing with little white babies.
A vessel of days half spilled.
A vial of poison
Drawn from a teat.
Always a cup
Between us.

****

Judy Belfield

I AM THE SHIVER OF YOUR SKIN

I am the shiver of your skin
on cool autumn nights,
the frosty puffs of your breath in January.
I am the elusive thought
that flits through your mind,
and the faceless specter in your dreams.
I am the grayness of your gloom,
the effervescence of your laughter,
the tedious sameness of your everydays.
I am so much you
I cannot find me
in the blur,
and though we are sliced apart,
you are the rests between the beatings of my heart,
for our souls have kissed in the twilight,
and neither you nor I
can ever be
alone.

****

Geri Harder

NOT BUYING

I can't stand your type.
The show, the hype.
Just what are you trying to sell?

You've got too many windows
And too many doors.
I don't want to know you that well.

****

Bev Garcia

BEDROOM SEASONS

SPRING

Wrapped in a blanket of trust,
nothing is too sacred to share.
Awkward experiments prompt giggling mistakes,
thrilling surprises and hints of submerged passion,
waiting to be freed.
Soft lips, gentle tongues and curious fingers
explore new textures and emotions.
Arms and legs interlock
as firm, gleaming bodies blend
in the urgent act of new love.
Exhaustion ultimately takes hold
as a new day blooms.
Satisfied lovers enjoy
the deep sleep of youth.

SUMMER

Balancing on the edge for fear of touching,
they feign sleep with steamy eyes wide open.
Heated arguments and dog-day problems
Boil internally,
forming a barrier of hostile bricks between them.
Hugging their respective pillows
out of frustration and pain,
they are blanketed by the perpetual temper
of self-imposed rejection.
Emotions, curbed by too many nights
of worry and tension,
shift into neutral, while spiteful dreams
intrude on an already unsatisfying sleep.

AUTUMN

With concession made and all else forgiven,

(continued)

Teri Moore

DEAR LOW JOE, FROM MARIANNE

If you came back to me, I would:
Welcome you quietly
Caress you gratefully
Kiss you tenderly
Love you unceasingly.
Please don't come back.

****

Julie Wroble

I DEAL WITH YOU JUST FINE

You call me up in the middle of the night
and make me laugh til I cry.
I laughed until I cried,
Then I just cried,
But I dealt with it just fine.

You make me feel so lit up --
that I want to burst apart,
And you're so tough I'll shudder
Sometimes I'll really shudder
But I deal with it just fine.

Playing it shy is the name of your game --
but you're such an eye catcher
and they love to look your way.
You turn yourself around --
and fix your eyes on me
You don't act busy strutting
You just like to let things be.
You tell me that you love me
time after time again
at first I didn't believe you.
I thought it was all so insane.
Now I know it's true -- we don't play foolish games.
I know just what to do,
and I know you feel the same.
Maybe you are a little crazy,
and upset me some of the time --
and sometimes you act pretty stupid,
But I deal with you just fine.

****

Bedroom Seasons, continued

contentment reigns in the stability
of years together.
The experiences of harvest days
flow from feather pillows to attentive
ears.
Worn hands touch familiar areas
with confidence and skill.
Satisfaction is taken for granted
in gentle lovemaking
under soft blankets of intimacy.
A soothing night's sleep comes easily,
resting confortably next to a loving
soulmate.

WINTER

Two pillows lay patiently waiting.
Regretfully, only one will be occupied.
Peace is shattered
by unrelenting recollections.
Scrapbook images of devoted seasons
intermingle with recent sorrow
that will not be buried
as quickly as the dear one.
Regrets and yearnings
combine to produce warm tears
that slide down cool, withered cheeks.
Blanketed by the constant loneliness
that comes with loss,
there will be no rest
for many nights to come.
In its place, midnight talks
with an old friend, now departed
will fill the icy hours until dawn.

****

Judy Belfield

SUNDAY WITH SIMILES

It is Sunday with similes,
Sunday afternoon with planned jot --
but not very.
Finishing popsicles is deflating --
like floating cold balloons
in air too hot and close.
How far away
ever,
is air?
It is always like honeybees and buzzing,
or lilacs and perfume,
or breathing and life.
Water burbles
and a clickety sound comes from
somewhere out through the screens
that bring in the day
which isn't real
because a flood of heartbeats
washes the room --
boom!
a single tremelo
which has components
that cannot be separated.
Ice-cream Sundays melt down the sides
of tulip-glassed years,
sticky and sweet for flies
and me.

****

Nancy Lockhart

THIS HEART

I am embarrassed by this heart
Beating about like an ugly dog
Sniffing in so many garbage cans
For a lick of life.
This heart, which is old enough
To be veiled in yellow fat.
This heart, grasping, releasing,
Like the thickish fist of a masterbater.
Brazen --
Too ignorant to know
Its function is purely clinical.

I should like to remove this heart
For a time,
Train it to a trellis of decorum
And enclose it
In a shatterproof casing.

****

Bev Garcia

THE OTHER WOMAN

She lives apart from the mainstream
in an imaginary paradise.
A lonely scavenger,
circling the fringes of his life,
swooping and darting at the remnants.
A voluntary addict,
living from day to day
on injections of unconfirmed hope.
He lives in a tightly spun web of
responsibility,
ruled by the faceless spider
that governs her paradise.
Desire and frustration are constant
companions.
Unanswered questions her only children.
Time is a painful enemy,
filled with mute phones,
solitary holidays,
and quick alibis.
Unkind words are never spoken,
for fear of losing
what was never really won.
Instead, she endures
and she waits. . .
for loving words and promises,
dangled like forbidden fruit;
for warm moments of belonging,
a few minutes, a few hours,
some nights.

****

Jayne Woodcock

THE FLICK OF A PALE BLUE EYE

I was loaned a new book today
Delighted, I skimmed through the pages at first
Gaining a brief, sketchy knowledge
Of plot, subplot, form and feeling
The style with which the work was rendered was flawless and fascinating
And I longed for an in-depth exploration of this newly discovered
masterpiece
But the owner of the book reappeared and reclaimed his property without
warning
And with a smile, and the flick of a pale, pale blue eye --
Nothing

I heard a new song today
While making my way down the street, I passed a young musician
Wandering his solitary way through a melody
His sax was sweet and mellow
And I warmed to the flowing tune, for it was full of things that I had
long wanted to hear
But as I paused to listen, he felt my wonder
Laid down his song with a smile
And with the flick of a pale, blue eye --
Was gone

It is a new world that I tread lightly in
Not daring to displace a single blade of grass
For fear the landscape will pack up and leave
Before I can acquaint myself with every hill, every stone
Every subtle shade and color it has to offer
But not yet secure enough within your world to lift the grey veil of
night not quite gone
I'm waiting for the dawn to come
In the form of a brief touch, a smile
The flick of a pale blue eye, or --
Something

****

Adriane Saylor

I SING ME

Noon comes down on a slide
rope
swing
I sing me like the dew
aching to be rainbows
and not be forgotten
the next day.
I see turquoise water and
dance all night to voodoo's rhythmic drums
I sing
my heart out
to the air of Jamica
and Haiti.
I jump as high as cricket
in his black dancing boots
and come down
with my Blackfoot
warwhoop
and men tremble in all different shades
of love and say things like:
crazy
sweet
tempting
and aint you scared to be out so late
and I answer with the voice of Kali
and beam on through the night like a quasar
holding the wheel of the sky under my feet
tossing planets away like walnuts

****

Maureen Mueller

THE ROMANTIC PEN

O. K.
I agree.
Too many hearts and flowers --
Diversify --
Too much mush and gush --
Expand --
Caught in a repetitious whirl of
moon, June, spoon
Philosophize --
They want Socrates --
Who needs more romance?
Expound --
Review the extant dramas of Euripides
(in verse) --
(Is diversification always this dif-
icult?)
Be strong --
write Plato . . .
(You'll learn to like it.)
But . . .
Here he comes again --
Distraction is very attractive --
Plato is no match for mesmerizing eyes.

Was that Socrates who just flew out the
window?

****

Judy Belfield

THIS MADNESS, TRANSCENDENCE

Days of crazed fingers --
boneless appendages
jellyfishing for worms
in the strawberry belly of Baal.
It is all a dream:
the schemers scheme,
the screamers scream;
and the night has eyes in its lip --
at least a thousand eyes,
one for each Arabian twilight,
to to watch the seventh veil fall,
again and again,
as a soft pall shades the sun,
and billions of limp fingers
fumble with the underpinnings of darkness,
trying to ignore death.
Ah, yes --
Life!
Days, dazed and hung over,
after drunken skirmishes with half-mad thighs,
confused by impassioned arguments with eternity --
days drip like melting wax
into tomorrow
with nary a scratch or a pin-prick.
How are the days to be settled
on the grand scorecard,
when "day" is only a word,
given like a name
to a child at birth?
How are the days to be justified?
Stars do not try to hide
from the shame of existence,
but stare down time's infinite throat
and bat their flirting eyes!
And why do the days delude themselves
with the idea that they may prevail,
when there is nothing to conquer but oblivion --
and beyond that,
the void . . .

****

Maureen Mueller

HE LEFT ME . . .

A moustache cup --
chipping several chips
Gold-rimmed spectacles --
greening with age
His railroad watch --
still amazingly accurate
The delicate fob --
love's braided treasure
His best-friend of a pipe --
lingering aromas of Prince Albert
A faded photograph --
Himself . . .

****

Bev Garcia

GOING HOME

He inched his way through the brush, his belly scraping the dry, crusted earth with every thrust of his aching limbs. He was getting weaker and he knew it. Rolling his smooth, green striped head from side to side, he looked around at his new environment. Overhead, the wind blew its hot breath through the withered grass and spiky weeds. Water-starved leaves crackled loudly, as if protesting their deficient state. The insects had been driven into shady hiding places underground or into crevices of brittle tree bark by the August heat. This was not important to him now, for the insects would not have been pleasing to his palate in his fatigued condition. The sun's flames bore down on him through the trees, every beam causing new pain as it hit his already over-taxed body.

Crawling forward, too exhausted to continue, but afraid to rest, he realized he had to find water very soon in order to survive. Rising high on his front legs, he poked his head toward the white, cloudless sky. Standing motionless, he took deep gulps of the dusty air. The water was there, he smelled it. But where? He had been smelling it for a very long time, but had not yet seen the all-important signs he had been searching for. The citizens of this place were all wrong for the water land. There were Sparrows and Grosbeaks, but no evidence of the sleek Terns or Herons that were a part of his world. He had heard the gentle "ribbit" of Treefrogs, but not the low, melodic croaking of the once-familiar Bullfrog to tell him that water was near. He scoured the air for anything that would give him hope. There was nothing. He had to keep going, to ignore the pain covering him like a warm blanket, there was no choice. To stay where he was would mean sure death. He must keep moving . . .

He plodded along slowly, methodically never cursing the heavy shell he carried. The mosaic-like casing was his only protection from his enemies. Birds and raccoons found it a futile task to try to make a meal of him when he pulled into his capsule. It was his protection, but it was also the very thing that was causing him to weaken. His armor represented the bulk of his weight, and out of the water he so desperately needed, he was clumsy and sluggish.

He tried to remember how long he had been traveling, and why he had ever left that cool, shady place he called home. He gauged that the sun had coursed its way across the sky at least five times,

(continued)

but he really wasn't sure. The days and nights had all melted together in his weariness. The memory of why he had left the river, the place where he had spent all of his long life, was hard to focus on. His mate and his children, they were at the river; weren't they?

His tiny brain strove to piece the puzzle together. He remembered the noise the night he left. There were always noises on the river, that wasn't unusual in itself. The noises came from the floating things that carried the soft humans over the water as they tried to trap the Catfish and the Bluegill that were his friends. They always heard it coming, and getting out of the way had never presented any problem for most of the river creatures. But that night was different, there was no warning. That floating thing had come silently down the river, blending with the rippling water. His family had swum innocently through the night, feeding and playing in the gentle current as he watched from his moist, sandy bed at the river's edge. The memory became vivid, as a picture formed in his mind. The water had churned up suddenly, trapping them in its wake. He could do nothing but watch in silent horror as his family was torn apart by the twirling blades, their shells cracking like the eggs they had all once been. He lumbered up the embankment, heading away from the river. That place was safe no longer. It was all so long ago; days ago, a lifetime ago . . .

He blinked his turtle eyes, the irises narrowing as he watched for signs of water, for signs of anything familiar to his natural instincts. He dug in with his claws, pulling and pushing his stubby legs to move ever forward. Uphill, downhill, but forever forward to the cool safety of a silken pond, a swift stream, a stagnant pool, anything but this hideaous, dry void.

There began a strangeness; something he couldn't understand. Suddenly he saw that he was no longer able to dig into the ground with his claws. The dry earth had turned into some sort of black stone. The heat coming off this foreign material was almost unbearable. It seemed to cut into the bottom of his shell as easily as the sharp prongs, carried by humans, had entered the tender flesh of the river frogs. He could hear the noises again, like the river noises, only this time he couldn't move fast enough to avoid them. The noises came from every direction. They were not like the floating things of the river. These moved much swifter and did not skim the black material, but ran firmly on it. He pulled tightly into his shell, eyes clamped shut, knowing that one of the moving things would soon end his struggle. He would die here, it had become an inevitable action. He almost welcomed the thought. He had been wrong; there was no water, death was his only safety now.

The sun turned orange in the afternoon sky as the heat shimmered up from the roasting surface. He hadn't moved for a very long time, the noises becoming so commonplace that he didn't consciously hear them. His mind had left this hostile setting and taken him back to the river, where in the cool evening he swam with his family once more, floating in the peacefulness of the smooth current. Listening to the frogs sing their hoarse symphonies, he dived for the spindly water bugs and larvae. Crawling up on the rotted log that was his home, he pushed his back feet out, spreading his webbed toes like a Japanese fan, and enjoyed the setting sun as it sparkled across the opaque liquid. As large, iridescent dragonflies droned softly overhead, he watched a plump, green leaf glide slowly through the air, landing quietly on the gentle water. The rustling of the reeds, as they bent in the humid breeze lulled him into a soothing sleep.

The smelly tires brushed up against the curled edge of his parched shell, while licking tongues of heat penetrated inside to the soft tissues; but he was content with his situation. He had gone home.

Chris Moore

****

GATHERING

Together, all,
The whole family.
Grandpa and grandma must be looking
Down from above.
Today they will see the best.
My cousin, the dope peddler, isn't here.
I've got relatives who have been in jail,
But, today that doesn't count.
Because this day,
Everybody's looking proud, proud!
We've got to do this
Tomorrow.

****

Brothers of the Sea

GOLDEN SHAFTS OF LIGHT

Golden shafts of light,
Rending clouds and tearing trees,
Talons of the sun.

***

RIVER OF RHYTHM

River of rhythm,
Melody of butterflies,
Nature's symphony.

****

Teri Moore

STREET SOUNDS

Street sounds
Sail the breezes
Through the window screen.
They wander, piecemeal,
heckling my ears.
A garage party revs up
Down the block.
Cars pass,
"Top Ten" notes crowding in.
There is laughter next door,
Whole rhythms to absorb.
I've lived in silence
Concentrating on work too long.
My rebirth must be taken
In measured paces.

****

Teri Moore

HE DIDN'T REALLY LOOK HURT

He didn't really look hurt,
At first.
He looked as if
Some playful body
Had sprinkled drops of raspberry nail polish
On his dark forehead.
The wound puckered open, slowly.
Harsh red blood slid down his face,
And streamed off his cheeks
Into droplets on the pavement.
The fat cop growled,
"Put him in the wagon."
They bundled him in -- wet laundry.
His head bounced off of the floor.
The cops hopped in and veered away,
Tires screeching.
Ripe raspberry changed to
Rust on the sidewalk.

****

Teri Moore

NO SHADES

No shades.
Drawn blue blinds
Invite notions of
Sweet secrecy.

Pale blue blinds,
No sun's warmth in those rooms,
A paired sultriness perhaps?

Imperturbable blue blinds
A sensuous signal
To a mysterious lover?
Promise of an afternoon rendevous?

Blue blinds
Speak.

****

Randy Varju

GIVE ME A CLONE

Oh give me a clone
Of my own flesh and bone
with its y chromosome changed to x.

And when it's full grown
my own little clone
will be of the opposite sex.

Clone, Clone of my own,
with its y chromosome changed to x
And when I'm alone
with my own little clone
We'll both think of nothing but sex.

****

Chris Moore

HE APPROACHED SLOWLY

He approached slowly,
His course of action
Undetermined.

Suddenly
A shot rang out.
Swiftly he dodged
Right, then left.

Instantly reassessing the situation,
He dashed for the door,
Crashing through
As if her were a battering ram.
Inside, he looked.

There was nothing.
There was something . . .
His imagination?
A flashback?

****

Teri Moore

PORTRAIT

Her derisive laughter doesn't endear her
to anybody.
"Girrrrrl," she drawls out, condescend-
ingly,
Snapping her gum sharply in a two-time
rhythm.
Thin silver bracelets clatter raucously
With her constant gestures.
Avon rings on every finger.
She likes to "party hearty."
She pretends the men didn't interest her
When she leaves for home, alone
To study her reflection in the mirror.

****

Judy Belfield

SITTING IN THE MARBLE-WALLED CHURCH

Sitting in the marble-walled church,
high, chocolate-colored pillars veined with black,
gold-leaf glimmering in paintings on the dome
over the tall, triple-tiered altar,
niches tucked behind intricately-carved Romanesque arches --
lacy, rococco recesses
which house the statues of sweet-faced saints
and Jesus Christ --
St. Agnes in pink robes,
a lamb in the crook of her arm,
bearded St. Joseph holding a lily-laden staff --
the gold tabernacle twinkling
as the sunlight plays through stained-glass windows
and dances softly along the communion rail.
The church is empty
and too silent,
but I hear children singing in the choir loft,
a yesterday echo of a solemn "Dies Irae" --
and giggles skittering through their numbers
as a new widow weeps below . . .
incongruent sounds of life and death
touching each other here in the waiting room of heaven,
from which all will go their separate ways,
save one
who shall everafter sleep in the arms of eternity.

There is a fragrance in this church
which isn't incense,
but a concoction of memories thrown together --
masses, living rosaries, stations of the cross, confessions.
The odor is in the walls
and in me.
It can never be washed out
like the linens
or the God who lived here once upon a time.

****

Kathy Sidler

GOTHIC HONEY

In refuge from the imprisonment of aluminum siding and the incessant clamor of contemporary television, I escape the confines of civilized existence -- conditioned neuroticism and monotony -- for a taste of the untamed and unrefined, to quench an almost insatiable hunger for gothic honey.

In anxious anticipation this September afternoon, I traverse the rustic woodlands I have explored vigorously and revered time and again, clothed in flannel and azure curduroy.

The rustling of crisp leaves neath my ragged suede boots mingles with the chorus of the crickets' chirrup and the trill of unseen birds. Though of countless variety and number, each possesses his own distinct voice and vivid coloration.

Amidst this melodic timberland symphony, I am allowed to witness an elegant monarch butterfly fluttering gaily among the foliage and after much deliberation, settling contentedly upon a leaf that dances gracefully in the breeze.

A satin-blue dragonfly in its fluctuating and leisurely glide, hovers near my proximity, teasingly, but never too near. The airy yet proficient flight of the dragonfly.

Red ground-squirrels bolt helter-skelter for the safety of the underbrush as their acute sense of hearing alerts them of forthcoming peril.

In the distance, a watchful rabbit with gray-tinged fur, nostrils twitching feverishly, gnaws at the vegetation ravenously. The instant my presence is detected, he bounds frantically toward the foliage, revealing an ivory-stained underside with every swift vault. In moments he has vanished in the thicket.

Atop the summit of two golden sunflowers sticky threads are carefully draped, a banana spider's artistic web. They strike one as being adjoined by his meshy net.

(continued)

Gothic Honey, continued

The sun blares loudly in the warmth of Indian summer and I am gratefully refreshed by the wind's cool breath.

Huge dark stalks of limb and bark bend to greet me cordially, occassionally permitting a gust of wind to shower me with a colorful array of leaves. Within the lofty palm of forked limbs is a robin's nest, grasped snugly and protectively. These trees, sublime and adorned, seem almost ageless.

How quickly the sun sank from sight. Oblivious to its absence, I anticipate nocturnal beings preparing to emerge. The brilliant crescent resting in the heavens begins its frosty luminosity.

Once olive-green foliage, now shades darker and richer, as if shadows themselves. Sunflowers at dusk now candescent, glowing in the blackness; yellow flames flickering in the breeze.

The wind respires calmer now, exhausted after a gusty day.

The moonglow brightens, a frosty hue, as if compacted ice.

Diurnal birds hasten to find a secure roost for the duration of ebony skies, some lulling themselves into slumber with their own soothing aria.

Fireflies become ephemeral candles in the twilight's pitch black.

Newly polished stars slowly begin vibrant glistening in their own rhythm and syncopation, yet silently so.

Gentle, yet distinctly audible tapping upon the trees assures me a woodpecker has not yet laid his work aside. Curiosity overwhelms me. Why am I not permitted a glimpse of this camouflaged laborer? Or perhaps it is only the flapping of wings, a straggler who has not yet located a comfortable or proper temple in which to savor his hours of tranquility, gliding from tree to tree.

I could easily remain youthful within nature's serene antiquity.

I am tempted so, to linger her infinitely. I would never weep for human companionship. God has blessed this woodland with numerous creatures I may love and seek out in dawn's dim light or dusk's fading paleness. Countless new endeavors and curiousities to satisfy.

Loneliness perished the moment I penetrated this feral kingdom.

I have at long last become one with nature.

****

Chris Moore

DRIFTER

I've always been a moving man,
Traveled down all sorts of roads,
Gazed upon nature's scenery from coast to coast.
I've taken trails up into the mountains,
And down into the deep lush valleys.

Towns and cities I've traveled by the score.
I've been where they are big and small,
Reveled at the peacefulness of deserted streets
In New York, Chicago, Atlanta, Houston,
San Francisco, Denver, Honolulu, Detroit, and
Phoenix.
My mind was overjoyed at streets filled to capacity
In towns like Prairie View, Quitman, Valdosta,
Monence, Madison, Aspen, Fort Valley, Tallahassee,
and Montgomery.
I swam in the intimidating waters of the Atlantic
And the Pacific.
I saw the Golden Arch in St. Louis,
Though it didn't seem like no gateway to me.

I've seen the bright sun rise
Over the mighty, longleaf southern pine
And descend behind the great western sequoia.
My eyes have feasted upon
The abundant grainfields of the Plains-States
And rested upon waves and waves
Of white cottonfields of the South.
My skin has felt the desert heat
And much too much of the North's chilling cold.
Through it all, I still remember the refreshing
Georgia night air.

R. Walser Yale

TODAY TRACTION DIED

Today it snowed
And like Snow White,
Traction died
And was preserved
In a glassy coffin.
The entire city,
Shocked,
Cars shrouded in white,
Turned out for her
Funeral --
A mournful sloth
Procession.
And though we thought him
Dead --
We prayed
For Prince Charming's
Sunny kiss.

****

****

Teri Moore

WORD LESS

Buzzing mowers leave a slippery trail of damp pungent grass.
Mothers call through back doors to wily curious toddlers.
White ice cream carts compete with shrilling chimes.
Black-bellied grills exhume hot spicey BBQ.
Bare feet find stray flower petals.
Crickets hide in the basement.
Wet paint snares bugs.
Summer senses awaken
Then suddenly,
Gone.

****

Geri Harder

OUT TO LUNCH

Aint the sun gonna ever shine?
It took the big vacation.
Maybe it went to Florida

And is never coming back.
Beach Bum.
Beach Sun.
Not that HE'S my sunshine
Or anything so bourgeois.
(lovely word)
Budoir.
Ce Soir.
Mon Cher.
Derriere.
Oh! I'm off on tangents.
I'm on speed.
(I'm in Econ 103)
Supply and Demand.
I Demand construction workers
Outside this window
But the Supply is low
Because it's raining.

****

Kathy Siedler

ILLUMINATION

Majestic moon, how well I know your many faces, though with each nightfall your countenance alters.

How many times have I gazed at you blankly or with wild-eyed animosity?

I feel your expressionless eyes upon me tonight, but you seem not to acknowledge my presence. You sit back in sublime repose and behold as I dream of distant shperes or stumble unsucessfully over broken and mist-paths of my inner self.

You do not reassure nor coddle me as a deluge of bitter tears stream down my contorted face.

How many times have I stared up at you,

Nancy Lockhart

BITCH OF A SUN

In the manner of a maharani
She dismisses the raw moon
Like a small catch returned to sea.
Her day she bakes cracker-dry,
Searing the huddled sheaves
As casually as she lights her candelabra.
In whimsey she splits the earth
Beneath her dancing toe.
At lakes, who hope to
Hold her fleeting face,
She laughs
Without apology.

****

Nancy Lockhart

IT'S YELLOW TIME

Let the Monarch migration begin.
Bring out the school busses,
The Ticondaroga pencils,
It's yellow time.
The days of mums and marigolds and
Topaz twilights.
The nights of ripe melon moons.
Time to set the golden flame
Back under the furnace.
We're in for yellow apples
And acorn squash
And festivals of yellow beer.
The days of rain slickers are upon us.
See the sulfur in the black cat's eyes.
This is the season of saffron . . .
It's yellow time.

****

longing for advice on trivial social affairs, hoping all the while you would annihilate the fruitless tree of society?

Why have you concealed your face behind clouds? Are you weary of my tirade? Should I also blot you out as I would a painful recollection?

Shall I walk away with your laughter pounding against my back, echoing out into an ocean of blackness? Or shall I acquire your attention by tossing stones angrily at you? Or damn your cursed supremacy? Would you have me humble myself before you as if you were a god? Would you then answer?

(continued)

Illumination, continued

Speak, you arrogant hoard of insensitivity, or is your supreme wisdom a caricature? A hideous mockery?

Yet, how presuptuous I am to feel you owe consideration of any sort to such an addled dolt. It is I who lack compassion. A spineless drudge seeking liberty from one who is not free to give it.

How tiresome your burden must be, to shower an entire world with radiance.

Perhaps then, you have spoken, I just have not heard.

Or perhaps in your reticence you have shown that the moon is indeed light, but only that so I may see the path that I alone must travel to resolve inner conflicts and possibly stumble upon a soul unattached to this insignificant dungeon of flesh.

Teri Moore

****

Brothers of the Sea

THE SUN DIPS SLOWLY

The sun dips slowly
A scoop of orange sherbet
Melting into night.

****

MOONLIGHT PAINTED CLOUD

Moonlight painted cloud,
Emporer of the Evening,
Mountain of the Sky.

****

R. Walser Yale

UP FROM COFFEEN

Chicago is a massive hand with five skinny fingers that caress her state. Her thumb (I-94) thumps straight north to the Wisconsin border, her index finger (I-90) stretches steadily west, then bends northward to scratch Beloit into Wisconsin. She playfully give the finger (I-80) to Davenport, Iowa. Her ring finger (I-55) tickles St. Louis and her little finger (I-57) dips into the Missouri and Kentucky rivers that make up the lush southern borders of the long land that is Illinois.

In between the ring finger and the little finger, about a hundred miles northeast of St. Louis and nearly drowned in a network os supposedly dustless roads, there is a town called Coffeen. Coffeen, Illinois. Montgomery County.

Unlike most of the 600 or so inhabitants of Coffeen, Steven Darrow was awake at 2:30 a.m. He had worked that Saturday night at Coffeen's Mode Theater, a place Steven laughingly called "the most culture these parts never seen," using that exaggerated twang and dumb southerner dialect to replace his own soft Illinoisan tones. "A moment's levity beats a cavity," he would say amidst a barrage of high-pitched laughter.

The Mode showed midnight movies on Saturday, and Steven would be there at the door, greeting friends, tearing tickets, or cleaning up the entrance of smashed popcorn. This particular Saturday night/Sunday morning, Steven was hurrying his post-movie clean-up duties so he could hit the road to Assumption, 45 miles north of Coffeen.

"Where you headin' to, Steven," asked the candy counter girl.

"Cousins in Assumption. Having a big all-weekend party, and I figure that by Sunday they'll be all tired, so I'm goin' up to . . ."

"Liven up the party, huh, Steven?" she giggled.

"Sure am," he said and slid into a long "hee-hee" giggle.

When the theater closed, Steven climbed into his pick-up, and instinctively made his way to the dustless roads that would take him north to Illinois 16, which would lead him to Pana and U. S. 51, which would take him straight into Assumption, his cousin's house, a warm bed, and hot breakfast with beer when he woke.

Highway 16 is a two-lane road, mostly frequented by farmers and their sons -- but by nobody by the hour that Steven was using it. Steven, in the slightly beat Ford, cruised up 16 northeast to Pana. It seemed to him that he'd been on the road a long time, but he'd just gotten on.

"Shit," he said. "Shit, shit, shit."

Again he started into an extended hee-hee laugh that bordered on hysteria.

He reached for the mike of his CB; the one his father installed as a surprise for his graduation. He hoped for a traveller or truck driver to be within his range. If he talked, he might be able to fight off his sleepiness.

"Break, one-nine, this is Weavin' Steven; anybody got somethin' they wanna get offa their chest? Hee, hee, hee!"

He'd been awake for hours longer than usual and he was tired, giddy, and highly imaginative.

"Break, one-nine, this is Weavin' Steven, testing, testing, testing. This is Weavin' Steven, you tell me your name, then we'll be even -- Steven." No answer,

(continued)

but more uncontrollabe laughter.

Unable to contact anybody, he started to whistle, look at his teeth in the mirror, and preen his hair. He listened to the far-off sounds and voices drifting in and out of his radio -- thinking how much they sounded like people he knew. Neighbors, friends, family.

"Shit," he said again.

Just then a particularly loud voice crackled into the cab of his truck. "Watch out now. Ha, ha, you gotta watch for them types of women, ha, ha."

"Some redneck," Steven thought, "but better than talking to myself." He reached for the mike, fumbled, dropped it out of reach, into the darkness before the passenger seat.

He casually leaned over, mumbing obscenities, and reached down groping for the mike with his right hand, left hand on the wheel.

The truck swerved gently to the right, went off of the narrow highway, careened into a ditch, and slammed into an embankment of earth.

Steven awoke to stabbing pains in his chest. Blood had pooled in his mouth, was running out of his nose in a slow, sticky stream. He retched, and the blood splashed onto the floor of the truck.

"Shit," he thought.

He looked about the cab, trying not to move his torso to avoid the excruciating pain he knew he would feel. He was cradled inside the steering wheel, a twisted egg-shaped piece of metal and plastic.

The windshield in front of him had a large web-like pattern of splinters. In its center sat a large, hairy red spider, which upon closer examination, Steven realized was a piece of his scalp. Outside the window, he could see the hood of his truck pushed up, back, smashed in wild surprise. Steam still billowed from beneath it.

His radio crackled in the darkness. It had survived the accident. Steven rolled his eyes toward the static and noise of the radio.

He watched it for a minute, grew tired, and decided to sleep. "Oh, Lord," he mumbled, "I gotta get outta this ditch . . . just put 'er in gear here . . . get off the brake . . . fill 'er up . . . go. Gotta go . . . party . . . party . . . Am I, be these?"

He started to laugh, but the pain that filled his rib cage silenced him immediately. Tears formed in hie eyes. Slowly, laboriously, he lifted his right arm, wincing, choking grunts of pain. He felt his head. There was a large, hairless cut on the top of his head, a bump that strangely he couldn't feel.

His arm fell to the seat and he reached for the mike to the radio that was, yet again, coming to life. This time somebody spoke.

"Hey there, now, hey there . . ." Sounded like some truck driver again.

"Can't quite make it, can you?" the voice said.

Steven's arm fell short of the mike by more than a foot. He brought his arm back to his side.

The voice broke in again, much clearer now: "Yeah, well, relax, buddy . . . you aint got much further to go, ha, ha."

For Steven, the conversation was relaxing, even if he could have no part in it. The pain wasn't bad if he didn't move, and if he slept a bit, somebody'd find him. When he closed his eyes, slow patterns of color would move before him. They had strange voices -- like country music celebrities.

"Where ya headin' anyway, boy?" the voice continued. "You stoppin' in Pana? Nice place to visit, wouldn't wanna live there . . ."

"Nope, not me . . . I don't like Pana . . . prefer a little nicer place . . ." the voice announced.

Steven thought that, perhaps, the truck driver talked too much -- but he was glad he did. Those colors, though -- the way they looked, "Shit, if I could take one with me. Pain? What pain? Shit."

"Can't stop once you've started something . . . you started, now, haven't ya? I tell you, man, I know a nice place you can go . . . if you believe in it, man."

"Once when I was young . . ." Steven was quietly speaking to himself, and the colorful voice, "we . . . me and my mother and father . . . sisters, we'd sit, talk all day on picnic -- or we'd play . . .something."

He sat for a moment, the entire cab quiet. No radio, no conversation. Thoughts meandered around in his head and were voiced, incomplete.

"And if you look real hard," he continued, "you can see them fish . . . kinda like the color . . . those reds, blues . . . turning, uh, white, I guess." A sharp pain silenced him again.

The truck driver interrupted Steven's monologue: "Nice place . . . past Pana, up U. S. 51. Sure, good food, whole thing . . ."

Steven was silent, intently listening to the voice. It was talking to him: "Boy, it hurts, don't it?" A tear ran down Steven's cheek. The voice continued: "You shouldn't oughta worry 'bout a thing, boy; life goes on, and on and on, ha! ha!

You, uh, just can't stop living over something like that. Nope -- can't stop living at all." The voice was soothing to Steven's ear: flowing, changing rhythm patterns, gentle beat. Sounds muffled, pushed, teased to words.

Steven's eyes opened for the last time. He listened for a moment to the

(continued)

Up From Coffeen, continued

voice, to get it straight. "You mean?" he said, "they're gonna find me, here --"

The voice interrupted. "If you don't believe it -- you will, if you don't . . . you won't. Got it, boy -- O.K., so you just ride up 51, that's right . . ."

Steven ignored the end of the voices, his mind tired, and resigned himself to a simple, "No . . . uh, yes, yes," then closed his eyes.

In between the ring finger and the little finger, about a hundred miles northeast of St. Louis up from Coffeen, past Pana, there is a town called Assumption. Assumption, Illinois. Christian County.

****

Julie Wroble

ALCOHOL AND I DON'T MIX

I'll sing my midnight blues again
I'll sing 'til the darkness turns to daylight
Sing along, sing along
Hear my drunken fight.

I'll sing about the pretty lies I tell
and about a friend of mine.
Try and take me as I am --
accept my piece of mind.

I need to talk of my troubles.
I ruined another opportunity for love,
but he seemed to box my spirits.
Why can't I feel love?

See, I couldn't stand him socially.
My act could only go so far.
My show was fading quickly.
He found me in the bar.

My icy breath cut him like a razor.
The drinks put me in a crazy frame of mind.
I wailed on that poor boy hard . . .
That's something in me I wish he didn't find.

Now I'm lonely, bored and sad.
I've lost the best boy I've ever had.
His music still flows inside my mind.
Poison alcohol makes me bad.

Sharon Fink

****

TIME TO LOVE

The round table was covered with a blue-checkered tablecloth and set with the familiar "Blue Willow" patterned dishes. The winter sun peeked through the small-paned windows and filtered through the crisp, white curtains. A hint of spring, with its long, green tentacles of ivy, was hanging in macrame.

Ellen hummed a familiar tune as she filled the juice glasses with orange liquid. The smell of bacon frying drifted up the back stairway to greet Dan as he awoke.

"Breakfast in ten minutes," Ellen shouted from the bottom of the stairs. Seldom a day passed that Ellen was not grateful for the convenient back stair that jutted into the big kitchen. The old house was so big that many extra steps were required to use the main stairway in the front hall.

Dan mumbled a loud, "OK, honey," and was off to the shower. Thank goodness it was Saturday, he thought, as he felt the hot water run over his sleepy body. It was hard to get out of the shower -- it felt so good. After finally forcing himself from under the warm, wet massage, he switched the spray to cold. The shock made his skin tingle. He was refreshed. After pulling on his jeans and gray sweatshirt, he trotted down to the kitchen.

Randy Varju

BREAD AND BUTTERFLIES

Floating on the air as a
chip in the sea
Turning aimlessly
Dancing fearlessly

Magic rainbow come land
land by me
and live in my hand
of the brave and free.

Or, be picked from the windshield
of an imported German car.
Manicured nails
white tie and tails.
And stepped on by the souls of
patent leathers that talk with a squeak.

****

Breakfast was almost ready as Ellen poured steaming coffee into the cups. The toast popped up with perfect timing. For Ellen and Dan, everything was good this morning -- it had been good last night, and all was right in their sunny, snow-covered world. They chatted and laughed over breakfast. The lovely passion of the night before was replaced

(continued)

by genuine comradeship. Not only did they love each other deeply, but they liked each other too. Their life was fun together.

Dan felt a smile cross his face as he gazed at Ellen. He loved looking at her. Her face was interesting -- he thought she was beautiful. Her bright eyes and quick wit displayed a keen intelligence. The sun "haloed" her sandy-colored hair, making it glow with streaks of gold.

They planned their day excitedly: they would shop for a few groceries, take a walk and visit the library. Dan was researching a project for his college students while Ellen was looking for something entertaining to read. She had only been out of college a year and was teaching the sixth grade. She loved her work, but needed something far removed from school for the times when Dan had his nose in a book.

Dan was seven years older than Ellen's twenty-five. He had finished his college days with a master's degree in chemistry, working as a graduate assistant. That job led into the fine position he had now -- teaching chemistry at the University. The couple had been married only a few months and had not fallen into the schedules of faculty society.

"There is plenty of time for that later," decided Dan, and Ellen agreed.

The big, old house they had bought was Ellen's idea. She had fallen in love with the large, sunny kitchen, the huge, stone fireplace in the living room, and the four bedrooms upstairs that ached to be filled with children. A family was definitely in their plans, but they were in no hurry -- maybe next year.

"Well, are you ready, Sweetie?" Dan chided as he rumpled her hair. He volunteered to clear the table while she went to get dressed. Ellen climbed the stairs to the second floor. She closed the bedroom door and slipped out of Dan's pajama shirt that she had worn to bed. The full-length mirror revealed a nicely rounded, well-proportioned body. She was grateful for the fact that whatever she had, seemed to please Dan.

"You're just what I need," he would say when he came home from a less-than-perfect day. He'd grab her gently, make her feel very much a woman and very much what he needed. She loved it! As Ellen pulled on her black turtleneck, she thought how they would miss their sudden and spontaneous love-making after the children came. She put on a pair of faded jeans and suede boots, ran a brush through her tousled locks, and romped down the back stairs.

Dan grinned as he watched his bride slip into her ski jacket and neck scarf. Off they went to the market down the street. Their grocery list consisted of milk, fresh fruit (oranges for Ellen and bananas for Dan) canned soup, and cereal. They ate cold cereal for breakfast on week days -- it saved time and prevented overindulging in the cholesterol of eggs. Ellen was determined to take very good care of Dan! Between the two of them, they lugged the groceries home.

After storing the food in the proper places, the headed for the campus library. The snow made a crisp sound underfoot, and the sun shone on it, making blue shadows. They walked hand in hand, each feeling the warmth of the other's hand through their woolen gloves. Familiarity had not yet diminished the thrill of even the slightest touch. There were sounds of children playing and running through the fluffy snow. Sleds skidding past them frightened the winter birds from the pine trees. The wind was getting stronger, and dark clouds were moving in. "Looks like more snow," mused Dan. "Those clouds are full of it!"

Ellen replied, "I hope we get back home before a storm hits. I don't relish walking home in a blizzard."

"I think a blizzard might be nice," Dan kidded with a wink. "We could spend all day tomorrow in front of the fire. It would be cozy and nice -- just you and me." His eyebrows raised with thoughts of untold pleasures.

The library was nearly empty. Students, who normally were there, were anxious about the black clouds and had gone back to their dorms early. Dan mentioned the scant attendance to the librarian who relayed the radio's message of a winter storm warning. Dan decided to take the books home rather than staying and possibly getting caught in a storm. Ellen browsed the fiction area and found a great novel that she had always wanted to They noticed the snow starting to fall outside the large glass windows of the library and left for home.

The sky had grown dark now, street lights flickered on and off, and the early afternoon sunshine had turned to cold and wind. The blowing snow stung their faces. The damp coldness bit through their jeans. Ellen shivered.

The hurried trip home was more solitary than the one going had been. The children had been called inside by anxious mothers. The birds were roosting in the protection of the pine trees. Only those still on their way home were braving the threatening weather. As the snow and wind became stronger, the cars moved slowly, cautiously, through the streets. Ellen pulled her neck scarf up around her ears and turned her collar up.

"You warm enough?" Dan asked.

"I'm fine," Ellen lied, as she wondered what he intended to do about it if she weren't. The books Dan carried

(continued)

in one arm were burdensome, but he managed to keep the other one around his wife as the snow drifted quickly across the sidewalk. In all honesty, Dan would be glad to get home.

Lights were blinking on in the houses as they passed. At last, their refuge was in sight, offering warmth and safety. By the time they reached the front door, the barren trees were dark against the fast-moving clouds. The black branches bowed and swayed frantically in the wind. Snow was piling high in drifts.

Dan unlocked the door to let Ellen inside first. The warmth came rushing out at them, and they quickly bolted the door shut. "I'll start a fire," offered Dan, laying his hooks on the hall table.

"I think we need some cocoa," Ellen added, "and perhaps an English muffin."

Dan exclaimed.

Soon a fire was crackling in the big fireplace and both Dan and Ellen had changed to warm, dry clothes and heavy socks. The hot chocolate warmed them down deep inside. They were snuggled on the couch under a blanket, oblivious to the now raging snowstorm. Even the books were forgotten. They shared the happy, quiet time in complete harmony. Each sensed the other's contentment.

Ellen was curled up with Dan's arms around her. He reached down and lifted her smiling face to his. He kissed her forehead gently, then pressed his lips firmly, tenderly, to hers. After a long moment, Dan whispered quietly, "Maybe if we're lucky, the blizzard will last a couple of days."

"Sounds wonderful," agreed Ellen. "You know," she added, "I've had a fantastic day."

Dan nodded in agreement. Who could ask for more, he wondered. What a wonderful time to love!

****

Teri Moore

TU-ROSES, CHEAP

People seldom plant flowers in the projects.
Identities are buried in the hard-packed, dusty soil.
Green newcomers want to "spruce things up" at first,
And wilting, forgetful senior citizens,
On trembly knees,
Scrape the earth to center a tulip or two.
Then thorny little boys run --
Snatch 'em up --
And skip door to door,
Selling "roses" for a dollar.

Randy Varju

CLIMBING STARES

The fragrance of freshly blossomed flowers, and the afternoon sun shedding its radiant shower of warmth upon my balding head, encouraged me to ignore the regulations I agreed to enforce as a patron of Naturecide Nursing Home, and formulate an adventure through the woodlands as I once did as a youngster.

I found it fairly elemental to elude the attention of the nurses by pretending to be insane as my roommate was.

Nice fellow, he was, even though he found it difficult to control the excess of his salivary glands.

I recall one specific instance particularly. Our favorite nurse, as we often called her, came into our room; she was very shapely and just beyond puberty, I would presume. Well, she attempted to remove the remnants of his lunch from his mouth as he went into a seizure.

I do believe we had spaghetti that afternoon.

Getting back to my original subject, I succeeded to get by the nurses simply because I blended into the surroundings. I then advanced toward a narrow path leading away from the picnic grove.

We had a friendly picnic that afternoon to socialize with incoming patients. I was successful in winning three times at Bingo.

****

My oh my, my mind wanders so. I have strayed from the subject once again.

Now, where was i? Oh yes, I advanced toward the pathway and proceeded down the trail that was to be observed only by those considered to be competent and independent. The only restriction I had from these categories was the wheel chair that old age had blessed me with.

Unfortunately for myself, the precipitation from a few nights before had accumulated in puddles of mud which adhered to the wheels of my chair, and eventually reached the portion of the wheel my hand grasped in order to gain momentum. However, at the time, soiled hands was a very small obstruction. My only concern was to enjoy my surroundings.

A few moments later, as I was removing the dark soil from my hands on to my double-knit dry-clean-only pants, I became aware of all the beauty I was surrounded by. I saw so many trees. I used to be able to name most of them, so naturally I was upset when I recognized only the maples, oaks, and pines. The

(continued)

sun's beams gently streamed through openings in the tall trees reflecting off the backs of squirrels fleeing from the sounds of twigs splitting under the wheels of my chair .

Just then, I heard the rippling sounds of water and was immediately overcome with a childish obsession to wade my feet through the water. I decided to follow the sounds of what I imagined would be a small creek.

Finally, I had reached the closest possible point to the creek. My childish obsession had now brought me to a very tall wired fence. By this time, I was so extremely tired and dismayed, I had decided to simply sit there and fantasize of when I was younger. The expectation of seeing my feet soaking in the white tumbling water, even though it would've been impossible to feel water on my paralyzed legs, was so great that tears began to flow freely down my cheeks.

As I looked up, I suppose seeking pity from the animals of the forest, I saw many birds. But they weren't crying for me. They were looking at me and laughing. They were all talking about me and saying I was insane. They just stared and laughed, just like the young children that couldn't stop staring at me when the nursing home took us to the state fair.

It took the nurses approximately three hours to find me. They didn't seem to be very impressed with the total experience.

A week later, the director of psychology decided it would be better for me to live with family. He said I was becoming influential towards many patients, and caused inconveniences.

And that, my boy, is why I have come to live with you and your masters. Come closer. Good boy.

Okay, now, give me your paw. Good dog. Good, beautiful dog.

Now, my friend, do you have any other questions? Yes, you just go to sleep now. You just lying there reminds me of a certain time when . . .

****

Tom Boucher

LATER

As the day turned to early evening, the smell of chicken lingered throughout the one-story suburban home. Alice had just finished setting the table when Joe, her husband, walked in.

"Hi dear," was how Alice greeted Joe.

"How are you?" Joe asked.

In a dragging voice, Alice said, "All right. How was your . . ."

Wham! The door slammed and Eddy charged in. Tears covered his beet-red face as his nose ran.

In a sarcastic tone, Alice asked, "What's the matter now, Eddy?"

Her young son said, "Jack Barber pushed me out of the window and I hurt my arm." The tears rolled on.

A concerned Joe asked, "What window?"

Eddy pointed to his left and said "At that new house they're building."

Whack! Alice slapped Eddy in the face. "I told you not to play over . . ."

"What in the hell did you do that for," Joe asked.

"Because he's not supposed to play over there."

"Eddy, did your mother tell you not to play at that house?"

"Well . . . yeah, she did."

"Go to your room, NOW!" Joe ordered.

Eddy walked out. Alice sighed and looked at Joe. "Can you believe him?"

"Shut up."

"What?"

"I said, 'shut up'. I'm sick of having you screaming every time I come home."

Teri Moore

SUBURBIA

Suburbia:
A place of chain link fences,
Bleached white rocks,
And bark chips.
The neighbor's dog
Lies panting in his cage,
Anticipating one small misstep,
So he can lunge at his imprisoners
And gobble up the children
With eager tongue.
While on the other side,
The elders speak no English
And work the earth
Wearing conical hats,
And magical flowers
Sprout out of the dirt.
While I in the middle,
Smile deliciously at the dog
And talk perversely to the gardeners,
Peering over my steely shield.

****
****

"I beg your pardon!"

"You can beg all you want and you won't get my pardon. You're always upset about someone or something and I'm sick of hearing about it."

"Look, I told him not to play over there, and he did anyway."

"Okay, so he made a mistake. I mean, come on, he is just a kid."

"But I told him."

"So he's being punished now. He's in there sweating, thinking about it.

(continued)

You didn't have to smack him in the face. Don't you ever get tired of being in a bad mood?"

"What do you mean?"

"You know what I mean. You're constantly ragging about something."

"Boy, I guess you had a bad day."

"Yeah, and you sure as hell don't help it any."

Sarcastically, she replied, "Well, I'm sorry."

"No, you're not. Just get me my dinner," Joe moved over to the table and sat down.

"Get it yourself!" Alice said.

"Fine then." Joe walked to the kitchen doorway and screamed. "Eddy, get your jacket and come out here."

"Where are you going?" asked Alice.

"To get some food."

"Fine. Just run out."

"I will. I'm taking Eddy so he doesn't have to be treated like some juvenile delinquent."

In a weeping tone, Alice said, "Would you cut it out?"

"No. The poor kid can't do anything right in your book. Last week, he dropped a glass, while trying to help you clean up the kitchen and you hollered at him all night. I mean, come on, I'm sure he dropped it on purpose." Joe coughed. "You're creating a monster."

"Yeah, Dad?" Eddy said as he approached.

"Go wait out in the car, kid." When Eddy walked out the door, Joe turned, looked at Alice and said, "When we get back, let's get this thing straightened out. Why don't you get your priorities in line?" With that, Joe left the house, jumped into the car. Alice watched as they drove out of the driveway.

Alice walked over to the living room sofa and sat down. She was extremely upset.

"Asshole. Jerk. Stubborn. Ignorant." All of these thoughts came to mind when she'd thought of what Joe had said. She convinced herself she'd done what was right and then stood up and proceeded toward the kitchen.

Upon entering, she grabbed the plate of chicken and walked over to the table. She sat down and began eating a wing when she started to question her actions.

"Is Joe right?" she thought. "No, no," she told herself. "He just had a bad day." She then continued on the wing . . . "Or did he?" She dropped the food. "Am I ruining Eddy?" She began to think of their ten-year-old, the hope and dreams they had for him. "Am I throwing all of this out the window?"

Alice left her chair to get a glass of milk. She went to the cupboard and got a glass. As she walked to the refrigerator, she examined the glass. It was out of the same set as the one Eddy had broken the week before. She'd gotten a dozen for two dollars. "They were no big investment. Why did I holler at him?"

When she got to the refrigerator, she could not open it. Tears obscured her vision as she set the glass down. She returned to the living room where she laid on the couch and cried. She actually cried herself to sleep . . .

Crunch! She awoke to the sound of a slamming door.

"Eddy, why don't you go somewhere and play for awhile. Stay away from that new house."

Alice panicked. "They're home. What should I do?"

As Joe walked through the door, Alice was there to greet him.

"I'm sorry," was the simultaneous statement uttered by both.

"Look dear," Joe said. "I'm really sorry about jumping all over you. The boss chewed me out because I blew an account." Joe tossed off his sport coat and loosened his tie as he said, "After that, I was so upset that I couldn't think straight all day. Look, I'm really sorry. I guess I'm not around here all day to really see and know what you go through."

"Thanks, Joe, but . . . you were right in the first place."

"Huh?"

"Yeah. I'm just sick of being locked up in this house all day. I'm sorry, but it's just driving me crazy. I mean, the same thing every day."

"Do you think we need a vacation?"

"No, not at all. A vacation would only delay it. The problem is here. We have to deal with it."

"I don't know what to do."

"Maybe I should see a psychiatrist."

"Get serious. You don't need that."

"I am serious. It may help, you know."

"My ass, it will help. I'll be damned if I'm gonna pay some creep one hundred dollars an hour to tell you you've got a problem. You're the one who has to fix it."

"How 'bout a job then?"

"Look, I apologized once. If you think you've got a problem, then do what you want. I can't help you."

The two sat and watched TV for the rest of the evening. Silence was like a blanket covering the room. Joe went to bed about 10:30 p.m.

When Joe awoke at 7:00 a.m., Alice was nowhere to be seen. She'd left a note that read: "The problem is mine. I have to fix it. Take care of Eddy, please. Why do we always wind up hurting the ones we love most, the worst of all, and most often. Love Alice. Later."

****

Sherry Meyers

PLAYTHINGS

A long, long, long, long time ago in a very, very, very, very far away place, there lived two kids. They were brother and sister named Matt and Mandy. They were spoiled rotten and ungrateful little snips. Matt and Mandy always fought with each other and were snotty with their parents -- except when their parents had a present for them. Matt and Mandy didn't have any friends.

Matt and Mandy's favorite place was the playroom -- closest to their toys, in other words. They always played there except when their mother, escaping a moment for herself, told them to go outside and play.

"Come on, Mandy, I'll beat you to the woods."

"Oh, shut-up, Matt. Do you want to bring any of our toys outside with us?"

"No, they're not fun anymore."

"Hey, Mandy, don't slam the . . ." but it was too late. "Mandy, that's the last time I'll have the door slammed in my face. I'm gonna kill you!"

The dark, eerie-looking woods is always the place Matt and Mandy go while outside. They never seem to mind the damp dark chilliness that wraps the forest. It greets them, opening its arms and welcoming them into its bosom.

Forgetting about dinner, Matt and his sister played until they noticed the woods darkening, signaling to them that it was time to go.

"Matt, I'm going now. I'm bored. Let's go home and see if we got some new toys."

"So go on. Are ya scared? Ha, ha. Mandy-Pandy's scared. What a baby!"

"Shut your face, Pig, or I'll beat ya up again, Matty Fatty."

"Oh, yeah?" threatened Matt, picking up a dead branch to hurl at Mandy. "Mandy, look. Look up there."

"Oh, you really think I'm gonna look up there so you can throw that at me. I'm glad I got more brains than you, Matt. You're such a . . ."

"Mandy, look!" exclaimed Matt, dropping his stick and pointing up to a tree.

"What is it, Matt, huh?"

Up in a tree, on a branch, there lay a bright ball of glowing light.

"Go up there, Matt. Get it!" But there was no need for Mandy to say anything because Matt was on his way up.

Falling to the ground, Matt said, "I can't get it!"

"Let's throw something at it," Mandy added, throwing rocks and branches at the illuminated mass til it was struck.

"Oh, my Go..."

The mass grew, lighting the once-darkened woods to a glow so fierce that Matt and Mandy had to cover their eyes. The light dulled, but Matt and Mandy's astonishment hadn't. They continued to stare at the dulled fireball.

"What is it, Mandy?"

Before she was able to answer, the fireball grew until it reached well over Matt's head, then a huge puff blackened the air with blue smoke and a smell like that of rotten egg salad.

(continued)

Randy Varju

THREE MONTHS BEFORE CHRISTMAS

Twas three months before Christmas
and all through the stores
all the stockboys were stocking
and the bosses were hoarse.
The mannequins were dressed
in the windows with care
in hopes that the spendthrifts
soon would be there.
The children walked slowly
all snug in Pro Keds
while E.T. and Star Wars
throbbed in their heads
And Martha in her Jordache
and I in my cap
Had just decided
to find the Mall map,
when up on the stage
I watched with amazement
a man dressed in green
dancing there on the pavement.
"I'm a dancing dollar,"
he said with a shout,
"and I only appear
 to those with clout.
 And because I'm really
 such a neat guy,
 I shall offer you credit
 on anything you buy.
 Electronic games,
 or a white Christmas tree,
 or even a sports car,
 if that is your plea.
 A personal appearance
 by Barnum and Bailey,
 or a tree of your roots
 made by Alex Hailey."
I looked at him
and agreed to give in
as he set down his cane
and hid his grin.
Then putting his finger up his nose
he gave it a poke and up he rose.
Clinging to the girders
up all the way,
I wondered if this man
also had a sleigh
And as the sun had set
to bring on the night
I heard him say
before he faded from sight,
"Merry Christmas,
 from beginning to end,
 and now don't you worry
 about how much you spend."

****

"What the heck!" Matt said, almost in a whisper.

The puff turned into a heap of shapes, creating a puppet-like creature. It was black and white, made up of triangular and rectangular shapes, somehow held together by masses of air surrounding each geometric shape. The face was a fat, round globe of shiny wood. Everything seemed painted on the puppet-- its eyes, nose, ears, and red spots portraying cheeks. The mouth was a string of black yarn which began to move.

"Hey Matt, let's go. Matt!"

"Shh! Mandy, wait a sec."

"DON'T MOVE," the puppet shouted, springing up on flat, pater-thin feet. Matt and Mandy were not terrified, grasped together.

"Will you look at this?" the puppet proclaimed. "Mandy in her beautiful pink dress and shiny shoes, and Matt, big, tough Matt. Matt, what's wrong? Mandy? Are you both afraid of me. Huh? Huh? Huh? Aha-ha-ha-ha," laughed the huge puppet. "Well, are you!! Afraid of me, Klondimple!"

"Yes, we are."

"Uh-huh, uh-huh."

"Good children, good. Do you want to go home?"

"Uh-huh, uh-huh."

"Would you stay if I offered you some toys? Some new, beautiful toys? I know how much you love your toys. Would you stay then?"

"T-t-toys! Toys for us?" Matt and Mandy cried joyously.

"Yes, you like that. Ha, you spoiled rotten kids! You're terrified of me, but you still want the toys I have to offer. Such greed!" The puppet Klondimple growled spinning around and around, faster and faster on the forest's carpet.

"If it would only take a little time, yeah, sure," Mandy said, chewing her bottom lip.

Klondimple thought for a moment. Lifting a ten-inch paper-thin finger, he asked Mandy and Matt what toys they wanted.

"Oh, I want a wagon," said Matt.

"Don't you already have two of them?" asked Klondimple.

"Yeah, but I want more, more, more!" said Matt excited.

"And I want some red jacks."

"Some blocks -- big blocks."

"A jumprope."

"Oh, and I want a new bike."

"Me too, and some dolls."

"Some cars."

"Give me more blocks!"

"And I want some..."

"Oh, and a . . ."

"Crayons."

"Coloring books."

"More . . ."

"I want . . ."

"Wait! Stop it!! The both of you's!" All these 'I wants' and 'give mes'. I can't even understand you's. You don't really think you're going to get all these toys for nothing . . . do YOU? No, there will be a price you will have to pay."

"A . . . a . . . price? What kind of price?" asked Matt, looking at the towering Klondimple.

"You will both change your behavior, or else."

"Oh, is that all? That's easy. Come on, give us the toys and we'll go home right away." Mandy sounded sure of herself.

"No, that's not all, you fools!" said the creature, raising himself in mid-air. "You are really going to have to change. You will become different children -- helpful, honest, appreciative, well-mannered children! Now, my little monsters," Klondimple floated around Matt and Mandy, "If you fail -- and pray that you don't -- my spell will deliver and you, my dear, little, sweet Mandy, and you, brave, tough Matt, will diminish into your wooden friends! You will join your 'friends' upon the shelf as another 'plaything'. Do you understand?"

"Yah, sure," they said together, answering Klondimple's questions, without the faintest idea of what he said. "Now where are our toys?" asked Matt.

"Go home, and they will be there, all for you to enjoy, but for how long? How long, children? Now, flee away, remove yourselves from me, but remember to watch your behavior. The slightest wish you choose to ignore from your parents will cost you dearly!" And with that, puppet Klondimple turned into a fireball, rising to the star-sprinkled sky, illuminating the forest, then vanished.

"Hurry. Come on. Let's go!"

"Yeah, hurry up," Matt said, anxious to get home.

"I guess we have to behave now? Is that what he meant?"

"I guess so. Come on, let's hurry. Don't worry, we'll find a way out of it, Mandy. Nothing will happen."

When Matt and Mandy entered their birchwood cottage, marking the floor with their dirty feet, they went straight to their playroom. Opening the door, they couldn't believe their eyes. The room was filled with bright, new, shiny toys. In a rush, they started digging through these new, undeserved playthings.

"Look, Mandy. Look at this."

"Oh, Matt, look, look."

"Amanda, Matthew, where have you been?" asked Mother in the other room.

"Hey, Matt, remember what Klondimple said?"

"Yeah. Hey, Mandy, instead of having to behave and stuff, why don't we just take our new toys and run away!"

"Hey, yeah. Then we don't have to worry. That's a great idea!"

"Okay, then, let's hurry!"

"Matthew, Amanda. I'm talking to you! Now get in here. I'm going to count to three and if I don't see you

(continued)

out of that room, you've had it!"
Still no answer. "One, two, three, that does it. I'm coming in there and you better have a good excuse.

But when she got there, there wasn't anyone in the room. Just a roomful of some toys.

****

Mary Rose Stonehouse

CONTROL

Are you the captain of your ship
Or only a swabby along for the ride?
Do you feel in control of what happens to you,
Or are you the pawn of luck and fate?

Do you rush to the daily horoscope to have a quick giggle --
Or to find your Life Instructions?

Isn't it better to feel in charge of your life,
And take responsibility for what happens to you
Than to feel out of control,
That outside events are taking charge of you?
The choice is yours, unless Omarr* knows better.

*Sydney Omarr is syndicated worldwide writer of astrology column.

****

Michael A. Stillman

AND AFTER THAT SHE NEEDED TO REST

Look:
☐ Mary on a crazy quilt
of broken dreams and mended hope --
the cloudy patchwork
of image and emotion
that her memory calls
life.

☐ She yields a tear,
and the night shatters into a million crystal shards
embedding in her brain;
acid-frozen, miasmic chasm,
cold grip, death,
and again.

☐ A square of matted indigo:
the optimism we call space.
a null-a void . . .
her ancestral home,
on a chill and distant star.

☐ A square of contemplation:
(Am I
the dreamer or the dream,
or the gray space in between?)

Listen:
☐ A frame of surprise and pain --
lifetwist betrayal
a tithe to experience
scream.

☐ she wraps.

****

Tom Schmitz

NOT AGAIN

Park
Fasten seat belts
Oil brake Alt
Drive
Oil Brake Alt
Park
Fasten seat belts
Drive

No parking here to corner

Stop

School crossing ahead

School crossing

Speed limit 30

Green

Left lane must turn left
Yellow
No turn on red
Yellow
Jefferson St.
Red

Red/White Red/White Red/White Red/White
Red/White Red/White Red/White Red/White
Red/White Red/White Red/White Red/White

(shit)

****

Mary Rose Stonehouse

THE KOREAN PAJAMAS

My mother always tells me that material possessions aren't supposed to last very long in this world or even if they do, they lose their importance to us with the passing of time. In my experience, I've found this to be false. In my case, a pair of child's pajamas is one of the material possessions I've cherished for over thirty years.

It all started back in the Korean War (1950), my father was a reconnaisance flyer in the Air Corps. This entailed flying into Korea and taking pictures of possible bombing sights. In Joliet, my mother, my brother (age two) and myself (age 3) were waiting for his tour of overseas duty to be over with.

As many American service men did, he wanted to bring back souvenirs to his family. My dad chose fans, vases, exquisite Chinese dolls, little children's toys, twenty-four-carat gold-edged dishes, and finally, for me, his little girl, a pair of delicate, brown, silk pajama bottoms and a hand-loomed gold and aqua Chinese mandarin top. The scene on the mandarin top was a fairy tale of Pagodas, princesses, fragile flying birds, twisting trees with pink heart-shaped leaves, and a host of exotic flowers of every transparent hue.

Several years later, we moved back to Joliet. Since I had gotten to big for them, I placed those pajamas in my barret drawer wrapped in wax paper. Many times I took them out when I was feeling lonely and just held them. It seemed to comfort me. I never told anyone because I felt strange to share the thought of being close to my dad by just holding those pajamas.

The years went by, my prized Tony doll and Betsy Wetsy doll were replaced by a record player and record albums; "South Pacific," "West Side Story," "Oklahoma," and "Kismet." These were dislodged by the Beatles to my mother's horror. I didn't take out my pajamas very much but I did rewrap them in a plastic bag to protect them.

In 1964, I graduated from high school and went to college. The pajamas were left at home. I came back married and collected them with my other things and moved to my first apartment.

Truthfully, I completely forgot about them until I had my first child, a girl. I finally dug out the pajamas and let her wear them for Halloween. She looked so cute in them and seeing her in them triggered a long-ago forgotten memory of how gentle and soft-spoken my dad always was with me.

The next Halloween the pjs were worn by my second daughter. By then the elastic around the tops of the bottoms was getting stretched out, but they still looked

(continued, next column)

Teri Moore

PURPLE RHODODENDRON

Purple rhododendron
Rufflin' at the sight
Of raggedy golden marigolds
Standing staunchly upright.
Rosebuds unfurling,
Gettin' ready for tea.
Fuzzy-headed dandies
Creepin' up wickedly.
Gardener on his knees
Pluckin' mighty hard.
His lone winter body,
Palest thing in the yard.

****

good enough to win first prize in that school pageant. Again seeing them, I recalled how my father and I used to walk on the beach and especially how loved and special I felt being with him.

The last time the pjs were worn was the Halloween of 1979. Adam, my son, scampered around that day and completely tore the crotch of the pants and pulled out all the elastic in the waistband, but it gave me great pleasure to see him enjoy himself with my dad's gift, especially since my son was named after my father.

From a Womans Day magazine article, I got the idea of preserving my souvenir by framing it under glass. I carefully mended them and had a framing shop place them on a soft beige mat, then press them under glass and edge it with a pecan frame. I hung my pajamas in the main hall of my home where I can see them many times a day.

They are quite a conversation piece. Now I don't feel strange telling people why I framed them and what they have meant to me. My dad was killed in Korea shortly after sending the souvenirs he chose for us home. Having the pajamas is like having a little piece of him and his love for me with me always. I'll forever value my Korean pajamas.

****

Cynthia Jean Craig

PICTURE PERFECT

"Extra! Extra! Read all about it! Senator Douglas caught in adulterous scandal! Extra! Get the Windy City Thank you, mister. Extra! Senator Douglas . . ."

The young hawker's high-pitched voice continued to echo the same news heard across the street from the Communique.

I bought the paper from the youth, and folded back the page to read the headline: "Senator Douglas Caught in Adulterous Scandal."

(continued)

Scanning down the page to the article, I began reading as I continued walking up Michigan Avenue.

Flipping to the page where the story was continued, I saw a sensational photo of the senator in an enticing embrace, one that had ignited the rumors to spread like wild fire among the administrative board.

Senator Douglas was in Chicago to gain popularity during the campaign.

Well, I thought to myself, this certainly was a good way of doing it!

I had been remarkably fortunate to gain possession of the photos in the first place. It had called for perfect timing. Actually, I just happened to be at the right place at the right time.

Whoever chose the man to have the film developed, carelessly made the mistake of choosing a simpleton, because he took the precious film to the local drug store.

It just so happened that I was in the store at the time. I was buying aspirins for a nasty cold, one I had had for weeks. I overheard the man at the counter ask the clerk when his pictures would be ready. Actually, it was not the question itself that drew my attention to him. Rather, it was the shifty, nervous look in his eyes, as he kept looking out the store window and at other customers.

I purposely stepped behind a tall shelving unit out of his view and continued to listen to his conversation.

"How long will it take to have my pictures developed?" he asked the store clerk.

"Well, seein' as it's early this mornin' you're dropping 'em off, I'd say no later'n tomorrow afternoon."

"Exactly what time would that be?"

"Whenever the delivery boy brings 'em back, I su'pose," he replied with a shrug.

"I need to know the exact time. It's important."

I moved a few bottles aside on the shelf in order to get a better look at him. Judging from his well-tailored grey, three-piece suit and polished black leather shoes, he was a man of means. Either that or someone hired him to make the drop and look respectable.

He began to grow more nervous and started drumming his long, well-manicured fingers on the counter. Taking out his gold pocket-watch, he popped open the carved lid to check the time.

"Look," he began, "it's only 8:45 in the morning. Surely you can have them back by this evening."

"Sorry, no sooner than tomorrow. There's nothing I can do."

"Very well then, I'll be back first thing in the morning."

As the clerk took his name, I made a a note of it in my mind.

I would have to find some way to delay him tomorrow, so I could pick up the pictures before he would.

Forgetting the aspirins, I quickly left the store to follow after him. I watched him board the bus at the corner. He probably rode the same bus every day. I could easily manage to persuade the driver to delay a few minutes longer on his morning route with a few bills of various denominations.

Entering the corner drug store the following morning wearing glasses and a disguise, I casually asked the clerk if the pictures were back from the lab.

"Yes. Just about five minutes ago. What's the name?"

"Mrs. Foster. Mrs. Samuel Foster. My husband dropped our pictures off yesterday."

"Foster, Foster, ah yes, here they are. Your husband seemed pretty nervous about getting them back on time."

"Yes. They're our honeymoon pictures. We have family coming this weekend. They'd like to see them."

"Oh how nice. The total comes to $6.50, Mrs. Foster." I paid the clerk and was out the door when I saw the bus first reaching the corner. I quickened my pace and hailed a cab. Getting in, I told the cabbie to drive south, taking me in the opposite direction of the store.

My hands were shaking as I took out the package and pulled out the black and white glossies. I gasped at what I saw! I couldn't believe my eyes. Someone had managed to photograph a couple in a very lascivious situation. That's when I realized what I had done. This was more than I expected. At closer inspection of the woman in the pictures, I realized that she was not just another voluptuous hussy.

She was, revealingly, Senator Douglas. Senator Rhoda Douglas. I recognized all too well who the man was.

I slipped the photos back into the envelope and put the package into my handbag. Relaxing against the back seat in the cab, I thought to myself the the paparazzi were certainly busy these days.

Coming out of the front doors of the Windy City news building, I couldn't help smiling to myself. I had accomplished what I had intended to do. Well, that should throw a bucket of ice on my husband's affairs once and for all.

Crossing the street at Crate and Barrel, I heard the bell in the tower of the First Presbyterian Church toll 6 p.m. Reaching the Chicago City Parking Deck, I thought to myself that this had certainly been an eventful day.

****

Maureen Mueller

VACUUMING

This machine . . .
Vibrating under the strain
Feeling uncomfortably like
Slipping belts
In the Thinker's brain
When pride tangles his mind;
Choking rhythms
In the Lover's heart
When guilt clogs its valves;
Whining uneasiness
In the Victim's soul
When doubt hides
between
the
strands
of
shag.

****

Bev Garcia

ANTI-DOMESTIC

The no-wax floor gets a well-earned bath,
the cat throws up her "Tender Vittles".
The two-inch shag is meticulously vacuumed,
the dog sheds the "Oregon Trail" across it.
The dishes are washed to a squeaky clean
just in time for a spaghetti dinner.
"Mr. Clean" died of exhaustion in the kitchen,
no mourners grieved at his passing.
The "Wisk" failed on ring-around-the-collar,
this grave phenomenon went unnoticed.
Accomplishment is not my middle name,
futility reigns supreme in my world.
Cobwebs and dust-bunnies live to ripe, old ages
in the dusty corners of my life.
An unbroken circle of disappointing achievements
greets me enthusiastically every morning.
The no-wax floor gets a well-earned bath,
the cat throws up . . .

****

Chris Moore

ALL YOU CAN EAT

All you can eat
Is common to see here and there,
Whatever the bill of fare.
Get your share
Whether fish, chicken, salad,
Or whatever,
You forsake the bread,
Pass up potatoes and rice,
Go straight for the advertised
Goodies.
If self-serve, you go back,
Getting more than you can handle.
If the waitress asks,
"Would you care for another serving?"
You reply, "Sure,"
Knowing you have had enough.
After stuffing your stomach
You rise from the table,
If you're able,
And waddle away.

****

Randy Varju

TWINKIE, TWINKIE

Cheetoes, Doritoes, Frito Lay,
My mouth is so full what can I say?
Pringles, Ruffles, Tostitoes, Jays,
What's this talk of a health-nut craze?
Cheetoes, Doritoes, Frito Lay,
Thunder-thighs is what they say.

Snickers, Reeses, Almond Joy,
I have three teeth just as a boy.
Froot Loops, Lucky Charms, Frankenberry,
Quisp,
My dentures make me talk with a whisp.
Snickers, Reeses, Almond Joy,
I should have used a teething toy.

Twinkie, Twinkie, Hershey Bar,
I don't know what calories are.
Ding Dongs, Ho Hos, apple pie,
Too many to mention, so many to try.
Twinkie, Twinkie, Hershey Bar,
I've only gained six pounds so far.

****

Maureen Mueller

STAND BACK!

Rico's nimble fingers fly
across the crusty boats,
Piling on the morsels --
vicious gas-producing bloats.
Tossing glops of secret sauce
enough to blow one's mind,
Garlic bombs of sausage --
peppers of the deadly kind.
Slicing onion rings with flair
(Frisbee-size at least),
Pastrami and some pungent cheese
he spreads upon this feast.
He glances at the head-cheese
but the customer objects,
So he opts for liverwurst instead --
prosciutto mounds are next.
Lettuce and tomatoes?
What? And spoil this baby's flavor?
Sauerkraut has more pizzazz --
Voila! Stand back and savor!

****

Bev Garcia

A DIETER'S LAMENT

I surely would kill for a big juicy steak
with piles of french-fries surrounding.
I dream every night of chocolate cake
and strawberry ice-cream abounding.

Spaghetti excites me for weeks on end,
while "Boston Creme" pies tempts me badly.
Lasagna can send me around the bend,
and for "Snickers" I'd go there gladly.

(continued)

A Dieter's Lament, continued

A "Big Mac" gives me goosebumps and shivers
and with pizza I'm not really shy.
But in my mirror I start to quiver
as my measurements start to climb high.

Now all good things must come to an end,
including my gluttonous ways.
So with carrots and celery my habits I'll mend
going hungry for the rest of my days.

****

Brothers of the Sea

MOUNTAINS VEILED IN MIST

Mountains veiled in mist,
Murky waters swirl and flow,
Song of restless souls.

****

Dan Zahorcik

DREAMER

A small shining object drifted slowly through the vast starfield. Roughly cylindrical in shape, underneath crusting masses of rock and ice metallic fins and wings could be seen. It floated along aimlessly, pulled by the faint gravitational whims of distant stellar bodies.

Empires rose and fell; whole galaxies were created and destroyed. Still the derelict wandered, oblivious to all.

Deep inside this hunk of cosmic driftwood, a lone passenger slept. When the ship had been overcome by a strange combination of gasses from the exploding star. Now he sat, eternally frozen at the corrals.

But he was not dead. By reasons known only to God, or by some quirk of fate, he had become suspended in time, perfectly preserved. Only his subconscious mind still functioned normally. He dreamed on, never waking.

He relived all his old memories first: childhood summers, grassy fields, cool nights spent stargazing. He joined the the space program again, he married, the gas cloud engulfed his ship. Everything re-occurred over and over again.

Hundreds of years passed. He dreamed on incessantly. Memories of events, incidents, and people began to combine and change. Eventually, there was no truth. His great-grandfather roared up in a starship and brought him back home. After returning to Earth, he wound up sinking the German battleship Bismarck, and later winning World War II single-handedly. Or was it World War III? No matter; a few dreams later, he remembered that it was his faithful German shepherd puppy, Wolf, who rescued him.

Thousands of years passed, and still he dreamed on. Reality became a fleeting truth. If he was rescued, how would he know? Immortality, long sought on Earth, had been romanticized into the "ultimate gift." Yet at times, the sleeper knew different. Perhaps Fate's cruelest act -- only death could ever prove out as reality.

****

Jayne Woodcock

THE ONE THAT GOT AWAY

Arnie Fitzenfeffer, inmate #1472546, was paralyzed with fear. Heart thudding and knees knocking in a wild, yet simultaneous staccato rhythm, he was trapped, feet dumbly rooted to the cold, concrete floor beneath him, transfixed by a mixture of awe and terror that stapled his soul to the ground. A thief and a cold-blooded killer of countless innocents, he had spent the last four years of his life on death-row, waiting defiantly for the consummation of a sentence handed down to him by an equally cold-blooded judge, a sentence that would be fulfilled at exactly seven-forty-five tomorrow morning. But death was not the reason for his terror; he had seen it too many times in the eyes of too many people to fear such an inconsequential, everyday occurrence as death. Yet now the stone heart of A. Fitzenfeffe was caught in his dry, wordless mouth, and his hands and underarms were soaked with the wetness of utter panic.

The terrible light had begun as a pale pinpoint of bright upon the cell wall opposite his single bunk. The pinpoint was so tiny that it would have gone unnoticed had it not been such a startling contrast to the deep, thick darkness he had grown so accustomed to during the past three nights he had spent in the windowless world of solitary confinement. Arnie would have been allowed to associate and socialize with the other prisoners during his final days, but as the hours closed in on him, like invisible hands around his throat, he became increasingly and irrationally violent, striking out

(continued)

at prisoners and guards alike with the obvious intent to kill. As a consequence, his final three days had been spent alone in a seven-by-seven concrete cubicle in total darkness -- until now. Until the light appeared, an incongruous little speck upon the cell wall opposite his single bunk.

At first, because of the black apathy that had settled in his gut during the long hours of solitude, he was hardly curious, but upon realizing that there was no logical source from whence the light could come, he decided to investigate, and crossed the tiny room to the speck on the wall. Squinting so as to better see in the darkness, Arnie leaned forward until the tip of his scrawny nose was all but scraping the rough concrete as he focused his unaccustomed eyes upon the light.

It was a horrible and soundless explosion that momentarily destroyed his senses and sent him crashing backwards into his bunk. With his eyes mere inches from the vibrating speck, the light burst open and spread immediately over the entire wall as a spark spreads when dropped in a pool of kerosene. The light was cold, brilliant, and agonizingly blinding. It swelled and throbbed majestically; it pulsed and breathed.

Arnie was overcome, his sanity destroyed, his mind a slick, blank slate of black terror. The whole wall danced monstrously, obscenely with the pulsing chill of the white light; it surrounded Arnie and ate at his soul. Then within the wordless void that was the mind of Arnie Fitzenfeffer, a deep, resonant voice thundered.

"You know who I am."

A silent sob racked the prisoner's thick body and he crumbled to the floor, quivering like a mass of pale gelatin. A howl began inside his head, a horrible howl, worse than the sound of rabbits screaming, intense and full of accusation. Arnie's writhing fingers tore at his hair, and he began cracking his skull upon the solid floor in a futile attempt to relieve that sound, to release it from the echoing confines of his cranium. "Please!" he shrieked. "Get out! Get out and leave me to die!"

The howl subsided, but the voice and the light remained. "Death will come soon enough, too soon if you do not hurry," it boomed urgently. "Time is the most necessary element for complete purification, you know." Arnie still shook in a heap upon the floor, his muscles deprived of all usefulness by the shock his mind and emotions had received. The voice became coaxing. "Your soul is slick and black with the slime of sin and the blood of innocent hearts. Here we give to you the chance for forgiveness, for eternal life if only you confess and repent. Purifying is a simple task once begun, but you must rise, dear fellow, and quickly . . ."

Arnie rose to his knees to face the omnipresence, his visage as dull and grey as the death that awaited him on the other side of the night, and began to confess. His lips moved silently at first, but the words they formed soon became audible, as, trancelike, he recited all the evil works he had done, all the heinous crimes he had ever committed. The light glimmered in approval now and then as the night wore on.

Daylight came, but not to the windowless cell of Arnie Fitzenfeffer. Eyes screwed open wide, lips still moving, Arnie continued the purification process as the light waited beside him. The rasping of an iron key in the lock of his cell did not deter him from his urgent task. The brilliance faded and retreated to only It-knew-where, as the door opened and the sickly light of the morning spilled in onto the floor of the cell, but still Arnie mumbled on, totally ignoring the priest who droned used-up words that held no consolation for the deaf ears of inmate #1472546. Not even when the guard forced him to his feet and led him out of the cell and into the long hallway, did Arnie cease rattling on senselessly in a voice too worn and rasping to be intelligible to the human ear, but somewhere Something listened and glimmered faintly.

Arnie did not let up on his confession even as the guard strapped him into the chair; rather, his mumbles increased in tempo until his voice became a weak, hysterical babble. His rolling eyes and writhing fingers were the only other clues to his inner turmoil as his voice rose to a wailing falsetto. The guard glanced at the clock -- seven-forty -- and turned to leave the death-house, the iron doors clanging shut behind him with resouding finality.

Arnie's voice was a panicked infant's wail now, and his eyes darted nervously from the clock on the wall to his own wriggling fingers, to the unconcerned-looking little man who stood impassively beside THAT SWITCH smoking a cigarette, and back to the clock again. Seven-forty-three, and Arnie's wail took an even greater urgency, the desperate sound of a soul retching violently in a final, futile attempt to cast out the last of its demons forever. Seven-forty-four, and the faceless little man by the wall flicked his cigarette to the floor, ground the burning ash out with the heavy heel of his boot, and placed a knobby hand upon THAT SWITCH in disinterested anticipation.

Arnie's eyes were bulging now, completely riveted on the second hand as it slid purposefully around the impassive

(continued)

face of the clock. Forty seconds -- thirty seconds -- fifteen -- seven, six, five, four, three, two, one . . .

A fire hotter than hell itself burst into Arnie Fitzenfeffer's body, boiling his blood, and his babbling became a high-pitched howl, a horrible howl, worse even than the screaming of rabbits . . .

The light glimmered sadly and turned to the star at Its metaphysical elbow. "You know," said the light, "it really is quite a shame. The poor fellow quite nearly made it. Only three sins left to go." It sighed.

"Yes," agreed the star in rather apathetic concurrence. "It really is a pity."

****

Teri Moore

TRUTH

Truth,
A lonely raindrop,
Cruises sadly down
A stagnant gutter
Destination unknown.
The bead collides
With spilled lies,
Mingles with falsehoods.
A purified crystal reality
Drowned in a murky corrupt pool.

****

Chris Moore

ROBBERY

STOLEN: One small measure
Of peace, humor, wit,
Spooky and funny stories,
Day to day happiness.

TAKEN FROM: Our minds.

CULPRIT: Lost inspiration.
No address known,
Still at large,
Considered threatening.

****

Judy Belfield

SUNDAY AFTERNOONS

On warm Sunday afternoons,
up and down my block,
if I listen carefully,
I can hear conversations humming,
or water sprinkling,
or weeds wrenching out of gardens.
My west window
brings in the allday chirp of birds,
and the cricketsongs
which start after the hot, four o'clock sun
fries me over a high flame until seven,
when it sizzles out in the liquid night.
These are silent Sundays,
and after lunch,
I relax in a sitting room
with hundreds of years in my bones
wanting to argue with Heraclitus.

****

Judy Belfield

THUS FAR AND NO FURTHER

We have traveled a pathway through the cosmos,
the new, uncharted, snaking river
that winds round savage stars,
threading its course past the Milky Way
into the great barbarian void.
We become mad explorers facing insane paradoxes:
we are the crowning glory of the universe,
symmetrical perfections cut down
by the bloodied spears of eternity,
hacked into the infinitesimal accidents
that we are.
Our eyes see nothing but everything
in the neverending blackness;
we are nothing and everything that is . . .
And those of us who live to return
will only tell of beauty
for we dare not speak the rest.

****

Kathy Siedler

CATACLYSM

Synthetic rebel
mock dignity,
the genesis
of polarity.

The callous sentry
Oversees the maze;
Obsolete concepts
Of yesterday.

Adipose tissue
Once Olympian brain,
Feast of the critics
Sapient, but vain.

Muted trumpets
Strain to recall,
Blithe notation;
The host is apalled.

A halo of smoke
Ascending the wall,
Dissipating . . .
To nothing at all.

****

Nancy Lockhart

THE PRIZE-WINNING PHOTOGRAPH
OF A
WAR CORRESPONDENT

I study, over coffee,
The AP baby with bandaged eyes and
No arms,
Held in the lap of a nurse
For its feeding.
Swaddled child
Shaped like a bomb.
A Baby Ruth
Whose chocolate blood
Melts into newsprint . . .

****

Teri Moore

IS IT TOO LATE FOR DREAMS?

Is it too late fro dreams?
Have they been relegated
To night's dusty niches,
Shed off in daylight hours
As fantastic encumbrances?
Or have dreams dissolved altogether?
Someone -- King, I think,
Held a dream in his head.
Images were shot to p i e c e s
On a balcony.
Nobody picked up the dream part,
And dusted off the treasure.
Is it too late for dreams?
Too late,
Too . . .
Langston knew
What happened to dreams put off.
Do you?

****

Judy Belfield

ST. MARTIN AND THE BEGGAR

A ghostly gray-white horse
against the sickly green sky
which teases his pale sinews,
bleeds through his flanks so delicately,
almost imperceptibly,
like age which comes to the shroud by moments
and barely touches the folds
with silent fingers.
On his back a regal saint
in colors bold and brilliant --
a freeflow of passionate hues
constrained by fabric
tightly fitted to his broad chest.
Beside the pallid horse,
a lean-limbed beggar,
tall and gaunt,
with skin as thinly tinted as a specter.
And all around,
the sickly green sky weeps
like drainage from infected sores,
and we are trapped forevermore
in disease.

****

Teri Moore

OBSERVATION

Certain people forget sometimes
And slip up and say things
About "niggers."
The word doesn't bother me so much --
I just wonder why they forget.

****

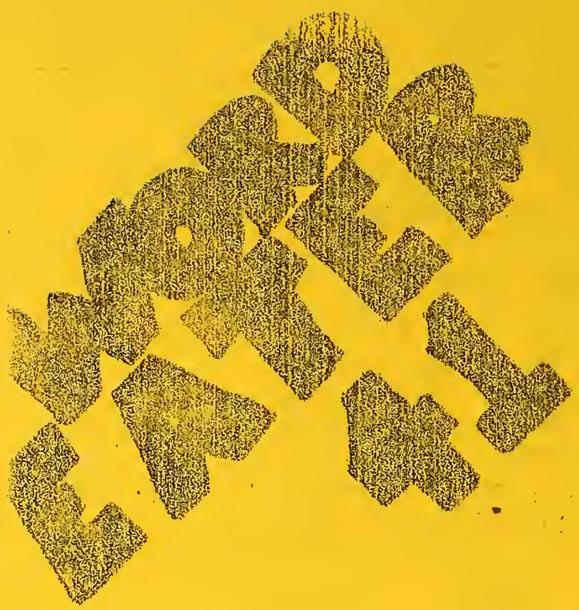
Nancy Lockhart

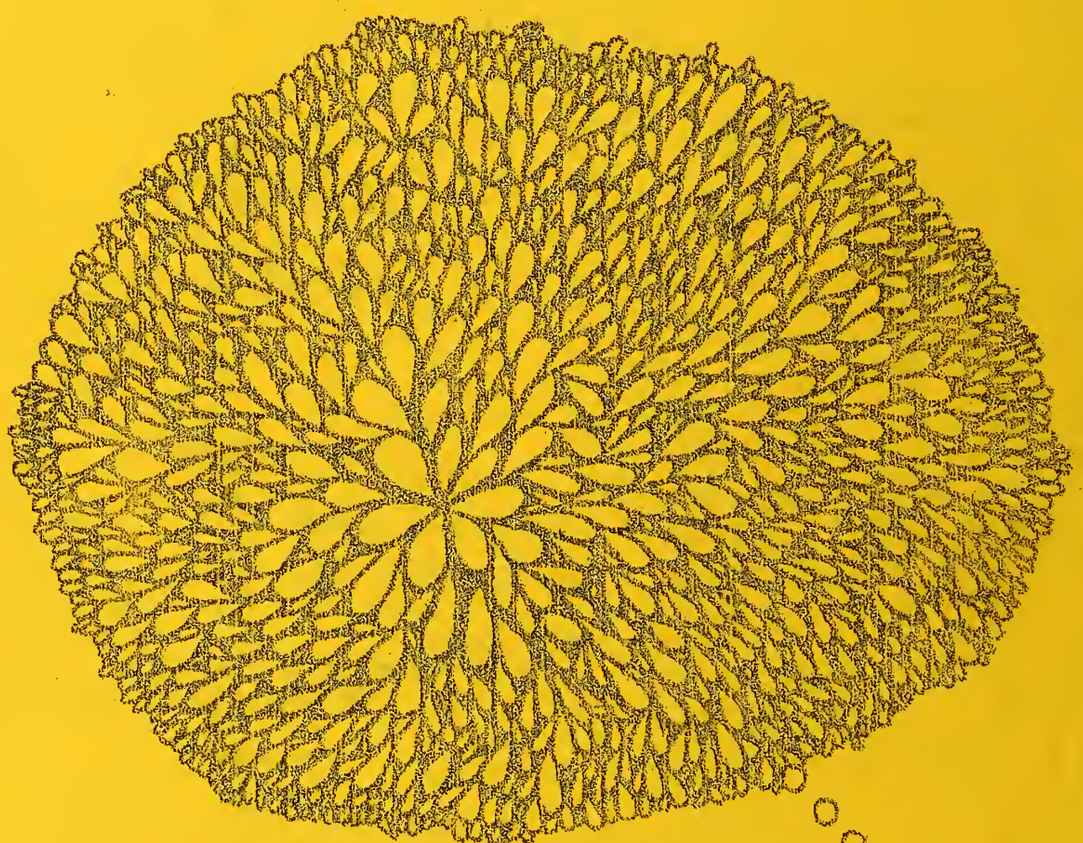
GRACE BEFORE MEALS

A Snow White death --
Clean, quick,
Like teeth which pierce
A magic apple.

Meanwhile, far from Monaco
(Just left of Hollywood)
Mrs. Nextdoor dies dirty.
Ugly takes it slow,
A slice at a time.
She dies like grey baloney.
No one seems to notice
Her mortality's gone stale.

****





"I strongly feel that to a certain extent there are almost as many universes as there are people, that each individual in some sense lives in a universe of his own making: it is a product of his being, a personal achievement he should perhaps be proud of."

Philip K. Dick
1928-1982